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PERIODICALS DEPARTMENT

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SEGREGATED DREAM HOUSE

REAGAN'S RACIAL COVENANT

RICHARD RYAN AND ELSA DIXLER

A few weeks before the 1980 election, Ronald Reagan told a campaign audience that he was hurt by his opponents' suggestions that he was prejudiced. The future President confided that he could "never personally tolerate any kind of discrimination." Recently discovered documents, however, underscore how easily Reagan, even as a young liberal, could "personally tolerate" the worst kind of discrimination.

On April 14, 1941, Ronald Reagan and his wife, Jane Wyman, bought a parcel of land in Beverly Hills on which they planned to build their dream house. They purchased Lots 1 and 2 of Tract 11006, developed by the U.S. Investment Company. In 1941 Reagan was still what he later described as a "hemophilic liberal." ("I bled for 'causes,'" he wrote in his autobiography. "I had followed FDR blindly. . . . I was to continue voting Democratic through the 1948 election.") But his bleeding heart did not keep him from agreeing to a deed that carried, among other restrictive clauses, a racial covenant which read:

> No part of said property shall at any time be sold, conveyed, leased or rented to or inherited by or otherwise acquired by or become the property of any person whose blood is not entirely that of the Caucasian race.

Another clause prohibited non-Caucasians from using or living on the property, with the exception of

> one or more persons not of the Caucasian race . . . kept thereon by a Caucasian occupant strictly in the capacity of servants or employees

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Calvin Trillin

LETTER FROM TEXAS
Molly Ivins

NICARAGUA'S RELUCTANT CANDIDATE
Mark Cook

COMMUNITY CLINICS
Tom Frieden

JULIET MITCHELL'S ESSAYS
Ann Snitow

A HISTORY OF SOUL MUSIC
Carol Flake

D'AUBUISSON'S ROLE

WHO KILLED ARCHBISHOP ROMERO?

CRAIG PYES

This summer El Salvador's President, José Napoleón Duarte, announced that a presidential commission had been formed to investigate five political killings attributed to the notorious death squads, particularly the assassination of Catholic Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero, who was gunned down March 24, 1980, as he conducted mass in his small chapel in the capital. Of all the 40,000 killings in El Salvador during five years of fratricidal war, the slaying of this 63-year-old prelate probably touched the Salvadoran people most deeply. Many poor people still display his picture in their homes, revering him as a martyr who spoke out in their favor and against the atrocities committed by El Salvador's little Caesars.

American and Salvadoran officials regard the probe into Romero's assassination as a touchy business. One of the suspects, extreme rightist Roberto d'Aubuisson, is El Salvador's most popular politician after Duarte, and is the Salvadoran President's chief rival for power.

Two years ago, when Duarte was President of the civilian-military junta, he told reporters that he knew of no evidence linking d'Aubuisson to the slaying. This year, as the Duarte-d'Aubuisson rivalry unfolded on the hustings, Duarte began hinting that his opponent may have had a role in it. In May, right after Duarte assumed office, a source close to the Romero investigation told former Salvadoran Ambassador to the United States Ernesto Rivas-Gallont: "Within four months of Duarte's inauguration we either have d'Aubuisson in jail or he's been cleared." Now Duarte has reportedly let it leak

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LETTERS.

'DOOMSDAY JUGGERNAUT'

Phoenixville, Pa.

The brilliance of David Pearson's analysis of the unexplained breakdown of numerous flight-control systems and procedures supposedly safeguarding K.A.L. 007 cannot justify the article's conclusion that the airliner was being used as a spy plane ["K.A.L. 007: What the U.S. Knew and When We Knew It," *The Nation*, August 18-25]. A conspiracy theory is simply too pat a response to the catastrophe of K.A.L. 007's downing.

The article would have us believe that certain powers in Washington or elsewhere, notwithstanding their inept military and foreign policies, have the sang-froid and organizational capacity to recruit experienced pilots for such a suicidal adventure, to coordinate the activities of numerous radar and early-warning systems across the Pacific, to maintain total secrecy about this fantastic scheme after its spectacular failure and to cover up the possibly endless trail of involvement in this plan throughout the military, diplomatic and civil aeronautic bureaucracies.

A far more plausible and terrifying conclusion emerges from Pearson's article: nuclear war as a result of a mutual breakdown in the "defense" systems of the United States and the Soviet Union is far closer, and far more inevitable, than any of us wants to admit. The superpowers are hostages to their own technologies. All the events described in the article fit a scenario of repeated failure and delay in both superpowers' sensitive early-warning systems to monitor a supposedly routine event—an airliner off course—followed by a predictably panicky and catastrophic reaction by the superpower whose territory was violated. As weapons systems become more and more vulnerable to disabling first strikes, the potential for panic can only grow geometrically. I do not know if we can change this doomsday juggernaut, but trying to take solace in implausible conspiracy theories is not a cure but part of the problem. *John Shniper*

'REMEMBER THE 007'

Washington

Congratulations to *The Nation* on the publication of the definitive article on the K.A.L. 007 incident. As one of the few journalists who went against the tide last September in investigating the contradictions in the U.S. story, I appreciate David Pearson's courage and his effort.

He has, however, left out a couple salient facts which make the case against the U.S. government even more damning. First is the question of the pilot of Flight 007, Capt. Chun Byung-in. He was not exactly your run-of-the-mill commercial pilot. He was a graduate of the South Korean Air Force Academy who had spent most of his life as a career officer in the South Korean Air Force. Only a few months before K.A.L. 007's flight, Chun Byung-in had resigned from active service as a lieutenant colonel (supposedly) to take a job with K.A.L., and in fact he was the personal pilot for South Korean President Chun Doo Hwan during Hwan's tour of Southeast Asia.

The second important fact concerns the transponder of K.A.L. 007. All commercial aircraft are equipped with an electronic device known as a transponder; when the transponder senses that the aircraft is being "swept" by radar waves of the frequency used by air-traffic control radars, it responds by emitting a coded radio signal which includes the aircraft's altitude and other technical information. This information is then displayed on the radar screen of the air-traffic control center next to the blip showing the location of the plane.

In the frenzied aftermath of the Flight 007 incident, the British magazine *The Economist* reported that the Japanese had picked up Flight 007 as it flew across Sakhalin Island, but that 007's transponder was turned off so that it appeared only as an "unidentified blip." *The Economist* went on to propose the "fuel economy theory," that K.A.L. 007 had illegally cut across the Soviet Union to save fuel. But then *The Economist* really fell over backward in its explanations, suggesting that if Flight 007 were trying to sneak across the Soviet Union, the pilot would have deliberately turned off his transponder.

As damning as the technical evidence is, and as significant as the military intelligence might have been, it is important to understand the K.A.L. 007 incident as primarily a *political* provocation—an intensified effort to prepare the American public for war, with "Remember the 007" playing the part of "Remember the Maine."

C. Clark Kissinger
Contributing Writer
The Revolutionary Worker

TOO EAGER TO IMPLICATE?

Madison, Wis.

I recently read David Pearson's piece on the downing of K.A.L. 007 and was shocked not only at his many misrepresentations but even more so at his eagerness to implicate the United States in this crime.

Although I do not wish to bore readers with a long list of Pearson's inaccuracies, certain points he made demand rebuttal. First, the maps he presents on pages 111 and 119 should be attributed not to him but to the Soviet Union. The latter map, of K.A.L. 007's alleged course near Kamchatka Peninsula and Sakhalin Island, is essentially the same as one included in the "Preliminary Report of the Accident Investigation of the USSR." The former, of the flight of the American RC-135 reconnaissance plane on the night of September 1, 1983, is also revealed by Pearson's text to be derived from the Russians' version of events.

Thus two key points of his argument—that K.A.L. 007 maneuvered in a way judged evasive by the Russians and that the RC-135 flew close enough to K.A.L. 007 to have spotted the airliner, and possibly to have "merged" with it on Soviet radar screens—are passed on to the casual or lay reader as independently established when, in fact, they are Soviet claims. If Pearson believes the Soviet Union to be more trustworthy than either the United States or the International Civil Aviation Organization, he should say so and not mislead his readers as to his intellectual impartiality.

Pearson grossly misstates the factual record when he claims that K.A.L. 007, by the terms of an agreement between the Defense Department and the Federal Aviation Administration, "should have been" warned by American military personnel that it had flown off course and was perilously close to Siberia. According to the F.A.A., no agreement in effect that night called for the military to monitor civil air traffic flying west from Alaska. The 1982 agreement Pearson alludes to concerned these routes but was implemented in March of that year and was in effect for only 180 days; it lapsed nearly a year before K.A.L. 007's flight. As a result of the tragedy, the Defense Department agreed last November to monitor westbound flights and notify the F.A.A. if any stray off course.

His suggestion that the Russians' failure to intercept K.A.L. 007 over Kamchatka raises the "distinct possibility" that their radars and radios were "jammed" is ridiculous—or would be if the incident had a happier ending. This jamming hypothesis assumes that either the United States or Korea possesses electronic countermeasures of almost supernatural effectiveness, and it contradicts the Soviet version of the incident in a most implausible way. The Russians claim to have intercepted the airliner over Kamchatka. In fact, they did not, but had they suspected that their inability to do so was a result of jamming, they surely would have announced their suspicion, for even a hint that K.A.L. 007 was aided by electronic countermeasures would make their contention that the airliner was a spy plane far more credible.

Finally, even granting all of Pearson's points cannot accomplish what he so eagerly wishes to do: to shift blame for the tragedy to the United States. *Michael S. Warner*

This week we are publishing a few of the many letters we have received about David Pearson's article, "K.A.L. 007: What the U.S. Knew and When We Knew It." Next week we will publish more letters and Pearson's reply. *—The Editors*

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EDITORIALS.

Readin', Writin' And Reaganism

President Reagan has engaged the issue of the decline of public education in America by ordering a teacher shot into space. That Administration plan for the schools got media attention for a day, and then the matter of education was dropped, probably for the duration of the campaign, except for the obligatory sounds of support for classroom prayer. The National Education Association—organized teachers—which believes that prayer and astronautics will not improve the schools, is working for Reagan's defeat. Meanwhile, parents and students who rely on public instruction can only wonder whether the edifice will survive.

The vital signs are all on a downward curve. At the secondary-school level in urban areas, the classrooms are understaffed, underfunded and undervalued. Growing numbers of middle-class kids go to private schools, Catholics go to parochial schools, fundamentalists go to church schools, Southern whites go to white "academies" and those with no place else to go, go to public school. That

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situation might be tolerable if the public schools were as equal as they are separate, but state and local politicians are not motivated to give money, attention or respect to the poor, blacks, Hispanics and others who are still in their charge, though not of their kind.

No Administration in the recent past has made an effort to improve the schools on a scale appropriate to the problem, but Reagan seems to be working specifically for their demise. He began his term by announcing plans for the abolition of the Department of Education, established only a few years earlier under Jimmy Carter. He attacked teachers and school administrators as the cause of educational decline, he advocated major budgetary cuts and he put religion in an adversarial position to public instruction. Reagan won't say it, but he would doom public schools to the same fate he has planned for the cities and towns of the Rust Belt: death by attrition. Educational triage, like regional euthanasia, would allow more-favored sectors to rise in strength and significance.

Reagan is not merely ignoring public education. The movement that bears his name has important bases in fundamentalist schools, conservative churches and nonpublic institutions. It derives energy from racial, class, regional, sexual and religious divisions. In the private, segregated, unequal places Reagan supports, people learn the values and take the attitudes of his ideology. Last week, *60 Minutes* broadcast a report about the explosion of Protestant fundamentalist education in America. An organization called Accelerated Christian Education, which identifies itself as a publishing house, trains teachers, furnishes material and helps set up schools across the country. This year, 1,000 new fundamentalist schools will open—an average of three a day. The hundreds of thousands of graduates those schools turn out will be ideological shock troops for Reaganism long after Reagan is gone.

In a second term, Reagan would try to give his base a big boost by pushing Congress to approve tuition tax credits for private schools. Under that plan, taxpayers would subsidize any secular or church school that can get accreditation from the local authorities. No doubt, some institutions of quality and high standards would be helped, and parents would be able to find alternatives to the increasingly degraded public system. But the net result would be the permanent subversion of democratic, integrated education: the base of the egalitarian social movement that has been sustained in America for two centuries and that Reaganism seeks to supplant. For it is clear that the "Reagan Revolution" which political pundits discovered four years ago is not simply concerned with tax rates and military hardware but is aiming to challenge the very premises of the democratic order of life.

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Covenant

(*Continued From Front Cover*)

actually engaged in the domestic service of such Caucasian occupant.

In 1941, racially restrictive covenants were common in California, as they were in the rest of the country. (They became an issue in the 1960 Presidential campaign, when it was revealed that Richard Nixon had once signed a deed containing such a covenant.) It was not until 1948 that the Supreme Court ruled, in *Shelley v. Kraemer*, that the enforcement of racially restrictive covenants violated the Fourteenth Amendment. And Ronald Reagan was not the only self-described liberal to sign one. But after buying Lots 1 and 2, Reagan and Wyman signed another, more unusual document. Pages 213 and 214 of Book 18854 of the Official Records at the Los Angeles County Hall of Records reproduce a notarized document extending the various protective covenants on Reagan property to the adjacent land, Lots 3 through 8, which were still held by the U.S. Investment Company. Here again, one of the provisions stated, "No persons of any race other than the Caucasian race shall use or occupy any building or any lot," with the exception of a servant. The document was signed on October 24, 1941; the next day, it was endorsed by representatives of the U.S. Investment Company.

It is impossible to tell from the documents why or at whose initiative the second agreement was filed. When we asked President Reagan for some clarification four days before this issue went to press, Deputy Press Secretary Anson Franklin told us: "You certainly are not giving us much time to look into something that happened forty years ago. If you're really going to go with it this week, we'd simply have to say that the President does not condone racial discrimination in any form." When we attempted to reach Jane Wyman through Lorimar Productions, we were referred to her attorney, Stanford Rubin, who told us, "Since Miss Wyman has not had an opportunity to review the material, she declines to comment."

Some light was thrown on the matter by Franklin Williams, president of the Phelps-Stokes Fund, who served as Assistant Attorney General of California in the 1940s and as West Coast director of the N.A.A.C.P. from 1950 through

Richard Ryan is a writer living in New York City. Elsa Dixler is an associate editor of The Nation.

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1959. "While it's true that restrictive covenants were widespread," he says, "nobody was forced to sign them. You also could request that they be removed. But the way I read this second agreement, I can't understand it unless the Reagans were, in effect, taking out an insurance policy—'protecting' the land they had already bought." And, he might have added, the land they intended to buy: Reagan and Wyman purchased Lots 3 and 4 in 1943.

Conceivably, they had overlooked the covenant in the earlier agreement and the later document was merely *pro forma*. Unlike the deed of April 1941, however, the covenant agreement was signed by Reagan and Wyman in the presence of one Robert Leitch, a notary public, so it is difficult to see how they could have missed it. The racial restriction is the last in a list of nine, followed by the notary seals.

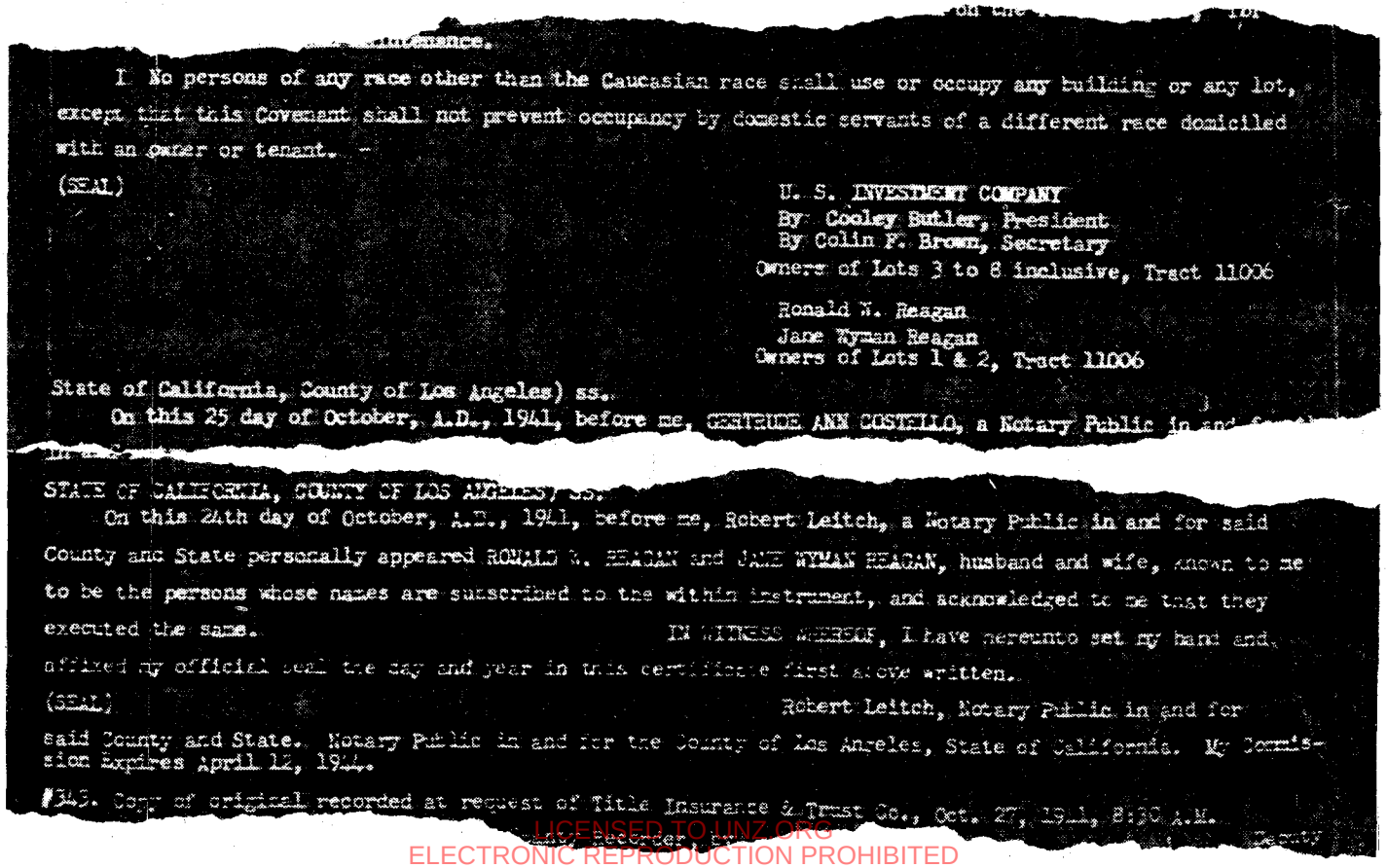
Thus, if Williams is right, Reagan initiated the second document to guarantee a white neighborhood for his investment. The White House specifically declined to repudiate this interpretation.

At the time Reagan signed the covenants, other Angelenos were gearing up for the fight against the system that enforced residential segregation in their rapidly growing city. Some sold property without carrying the restrictions contained in the covenants over into the new deeds; others sold to non-Caucasians in violation of the covenants. But when Ronald Reagan disposed of Lots 3 and 4, in 1945, and Jane Wyman sold Lots 1 and 2 after divorcing Reagan, in 1948, neither deleted the racially restrictive clauses from the agreements. Not until Laurance and Patricia Taylor, the current owners of Lots 3 and 4, bought the property in 1981 were those provisions explicitly dropped. (The state ceased to enforce such covenants after 1948, but they were still carried on many deeds.)

In the early 1940s, many individuals and organizations in California went to court to challenge racially restrictive covenants. In *Caucasians Only*, a study published in 1959, Clement Vose, a professor of political science at Wesleyan University, reports that in Los Angeles alone more than twenty covenant suits affecting a hundred black families had been filed by 1945. Scores of other suits were instituted in Chicago, Washington, St. Louis and Detroit. When the restrictive covenant cases finally reached the Supreme Court, amicus curiae briefs on behalf of the parties challenging them were filed by, among others, the American Jewish Committee, the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, the N.A.A.C.P., the American Veterans Committee and the National Community Relations Advisory Council, representing twenty-nine member organizations.

The late Loren Miller, who masterminded the legal assault against restrictive covenants, told an N.A.A.C.P. conference in 1945 that there were more such cases in Los Angeles than in any other American city. Professor Vose reports that suits in Los Angeles involving such well-known black actresses as Hattie McDaniel and Ethel Waters drew wide press coverage.

In his autobiography, *Where's the Rest of Me?*, Reagan tells the story of how his father, traveling as a salesman, had refused to stay in a hotel that barred Jews. "'I'm a Catholic' he said furiously, 'and if it's come to the point where you won't take Jews, you won't take me either.'" His dad spent the night in his car in a snowstorm, Reagan claims, and contracted pneumonia as a result. The gods, apparently, did not visit the virtues of the father on the son. □



I No persons of any race other than the Caucasian race shall use or occupy any building or any lot, except that this Covenant shall not prevent occupancy by domestic servants of a different race domiciled with an owner or tenant. -

(SEAL)

U. S. INVESTMENT COMPANY
By Cooley Butler, President
By Colin F. Brown, Secretary
Owners of Lots 3 to 8 inclusive, Tract 11006

Ronald W. Reagan
Jane Wyman Reagan
Owners of Lots 1 & 2, Tract 11006

State of California, County of Los Angeles) ss.
On this 25 day of October, A.D., 1941, before me, GERTRUDE ANN COSTELLO, a Notary Public in and

STATE OF CALIFORNIA, COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES, ss.
On this 24th day of October, A.D., 1941, before me, Robert Leitch, a Notary Public in and for said County and State personally appeared RONALD W. REAGAN and JANE WYMAN REAGAN, husband and wife, known to me to be the persons whose names are subscribed to the within instrument, and acknowledged to me that they executed the same. IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my official seal the day and year in this certificate first above written.

(SEAL) Robert Leitch, Notary Public in and for said County and State. Notary Public in and for the County of Los Angeles, State of California. My Commission Expires April 12, 1944.

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BEAT THE DEVIL.

Yesterday's Papers

In an effort to revive his flagging campaign and present himself as a forceful personality, Walter Mondale today denounced President Reagan in unusually harsh terms. Portraying the President as "a half-dead drag queen" who "likes to dress up in women's clothes and read romantic slush," Mr. Mondale pledged that he would wear male attire "100 percent of the time." In what aides explained was an attempt to dramatize the new "macho Mondale," the former Vice President made his speech dressed in a loincloth. He occasionally brandished a large club and moved to the front of the stage to kick supporters in the face.

Responding to the attack, President Reagan described Mr. Mondale as "a rat in sheep's clothing" and urged voters to examine the issues.

Right Turn Only

Underlining what has long been obvious, *Policy Review*, gossip sheet of the crank rightists at the Heritage Foundation, has an article by Dinesh D'Souza in its Fall issue, noting with pleasure the present political tenor of *The New York Times*. "The front page," D'Souza writes, "is less likely now to feature articles on suffering welfare mothers, and more likely to chronicle the resurgence of patriotism and family values. . . . [Executive editor] Abraham Rosenthal's effort to restore balance is welcome. . . . *The New York Times* . . . is reaffirming its greatness . . . and once again taking up responsible journalism."

Rather in the same manner, William A. Henry 3d's column in the October 1 issue of *Time* praised Martin Peretz's *New Republic* as "quirky" and "thought-provoking," the code words in such a context for undiluted reaction. *Time*'s admiration coincided with a more than usually horrible article in the October 8 *New Republic*, "The Sins of the Sandinistas," by Robert S. Leiken.

Leiken purports to attack the Sandinistas from the left, a contortion given his past role, undisclosed by *The New Republic*, as drum majorette for Edén Pastora and Arturo Cruz. Among the more egregious slanders: Leiken mentions an old woman who made four trips to a local hospital but could not get a doctor's appointment (an experience he suggests typifies the failure of the revolution). As a matter of statistical record, the annual number of medical consultations per person in Nicaragua nearly tripled between 1978, the best prerevolutionary year, and 1982. More than 300 health clinics have been built or staffed since the revolution. More than 80 percent of the population has good access to health care. Before the revolution, 10 percent of the population consumed 80 percent of the health services, while more than 50 percent had never been to a doctor or hospital.

Leiken has the insolence to write that before the revolution "even poor Nicaraguans were accustomed to beef and chicken." This drivel makes it hard to explain why 67 percent of all children were malnourished. What *The New Republic* favors in its quirky way is continued aid to the *contras*, who quirkily rape and kill people.

From Lies Immemorial (Cont.)

It is the central proposition of Joan Peters's *From Time Immemorial* that Jews did not displace Arabs in Palestine but that Arabs immigrated to areas of Jewish settlement to thrive in the reflected glow of Jewish endeavor. Most of the Arab refugees of 1948 were not, therefore, evicted from an ancient inheritance, as the Palestinians claim. They have about as much right to their supposedly native soil as would American Indians if they had settled in the United States after the Mayflower's arrival—and only because of the lure of superior Puritan civilization. Such is the Peters thesis.

Peters's work is historical exterminism on a grand scale. It is misrepresentation on the grand scale too. In my last column I summarized an article by Norman Finkelstein in *In These Times* which showed how Peters had mangled historical data. Consider now the findings of Bill Farrell, a Columbia University law student who reviewed the book in the Fall issue of the *Journal of Palestine Studies*.

Peters derives many of her central conclusions from census data compiled by the Ottoman Empire. Citing as her guide Prof. Kemal Karpat of the University of Wisconsin and purportedly drawing on his analysis of the 1893 Ottoman census, she concludes that there were almost 60,000 Jews and 92,300 non-Jews in the area of Western Palestine that became Israel. Since about 38,000 of the non-Jews were Christian, she argues, "Jews were perhaps actually a marginal majority." Aside from graver sins, this ignores a substantial Arab Christian community and confuses majority with plurality.

Karpat, who had not read Peters's book when he spoke to Farrell in June, told him that there were "many more Palestinians" than she reports and that the Ottoman and British mandate subdistricts, which Peters claims "closely" correspond, were not even broadly similar. Karpat's study of the 1893 census shows that setting aside Christian Palestinians, there were 371,969 Moslems and 9,817 Jews in all Palestine. Even in Tabarya, in the Western Palestinian administrative division of Akka (Acre), the census subdistrict with the highest ratio of Jews, Jews made up a little less than 13 percent of the total. In the Hayfa (Haifa) subdistrict they made up slightly less than 3.1 percent. Thus Karpat's findings entirely contradict Peters's figures and conclusions.

She also ignores a paper by Prof. Justin McCarthy of the University of Louisville, presented at a conference sponsored by the University of Haifa and published in 1981, that shows that the Palestinian population was severely undercounted in the census of 1893. When the corrections called for in McCarthy's paper are made, the number of Moslems totals 419,311 as against 10,746 Jews. Nor can Peters use Ottoman census data to argue that Jewish immigration after 1893 radically altered the population in a manner favorable to her thesis. The 1911-12 Ottoman census as corrected by McCarthy (also ignored by Peters) sets the population of Palestine at 750,393, of which no more than 40,733 could have been Jews. The total Jewish population of the Akka

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ALEXANDER COCKBURN

and Nablus administrative districts could not have exceeded 17,877. And the population of Kadus, a special district, included 22,856 Jews.

Peters's Frankenstein

To show supposed Moslem immigration to areas of Jewish settlement pre-1893, Peters calls on the accounts of European travelers and demographers, many of whom displayed a racist bias in arguing that the Arab population had declined until Jewish settlement attracted immigration. (It is as if one were to rely on General Custer for census data on the American West.) But on whom exactly Peters is relying is not always clear.

On pages 158 and 159 of her book, after citing the reminiscences of the eighteenth-century French scholar Count Constantin François Volney, Peters writes:

> Another writer, describing "Syria" (and Palestine) some *sixty years later in 1843*, stated that, in Volney's day, "the land had not fully reached its last prophetic degree of desolation and depopulation."
>
> From place to place the reporters varied, but not the reports: J.S. Buckingham described his visit of 1816 to Jaffa, which "has all the appearances of a poor village, and every part of it that we saw was of corresponding meanness." Buckingham described Ramle, "where, as throughout the greater part of Palestine, the ruined portion seemed more extensive than that which was inhabited."
>
> After a visit in 1817-1818, travelers reported that there was not "a single boat of any description on the lake [Tiberias]." In a German encyclopedia published in 1827, Palestine was depicted as "desolate and roamed through by Arab bands of robbers."
>
> Throughout the nineteenth century the abandonment and dismal state of the terrain was lamented. In 1840 an observer, who was traveling through, wrote of his admiration for the Syrian "fine spirited race of men" whose "population is on the decline." While scorning the idea of Jewish colonization, the writer observed that the once populous area between Hebron and Bethlehem was "now abandoned and desolate" with "dilapidated towns." Jerusalem consisted of "a large number of houses . . . in a dilapidated and ruinous state," and "the masses really seem to be without any regular employment."

On pages 122 through 124 of the 1944 edition of his frankly partisan tract, *Justice For My People*, Ernst Frankenstein writes, after citing the reminiscences of the same Count Volney:

> Buckingham, who visited the country in 1816, states that Jaffa "has all the appearances of a poor village, and every part of it that we saw was of corresponding meanness." He visited Ramleh "where, as throughout the greater part of Palestine, the ruined portion seemed more extensive than that which was inhabited." . . .
>
> Thereafter conditions deteriorated further. "In his (Volney's) day," writes Keith in 1843, "the land had not fully reached its last prophetic degree of desolation and depopulation. The population (viz., of the whole of Syria), rated by Volney at two million and a half, is now estimated at half that amount."
>
> This statement corresponds to the observations of other travellers, for instance Olin (1840) who is a specially valuable witness, since he admires the Palestinian ("Syrian") population ("a fine-spirited race of men") and ridicules the idea of Jewish colonization. According to him "the population is on the decline." In Hebron "many houses are in a dilapidated state and uninhabited"; the once populated region between Hebron and Bethlehem is "now abandoned and desolate" and has "dilapidated towns." In Jerusalem "a large number of houses are in a dilapidated and ruinous state"; "the masses really seem to be without any regular employment." . . .
>
> A German Encyclopedia published in 1827 calls Palestine "desolate and roamed through by Arab bands of robbers." Irby, who visited the country in 1817-18, found "not a single boat of any description on the lake (of Tiberias)."

Peters's only original contribution here is to put the estimate of Syria's population in a footnote, whereas Frankenstein has it in the body of the text. Yet Peters does not acknowledge Frankenstein's book as her source, despite the fact that the citations in her footnotes are identical to his. Norman Finkelstein, who discovered this coincidence, passed on the pertinent documentation to Aaron Asher of Harper & Row, publisher of *From Time Immemorial*. Asher told me that the "so-called plagiarism" was "a teapot tempest," though had he known of it he might, as her editor, have suggested that she handle "the mechanics of citation" differently. Asher also told me that he has been assured that Peters has copies of all the relevant citations in her files.

This suggests that even if she did not acknowledge her debt to Frankenstein, she had examined his (hence, her) original sources. Peters does acknowledge Frankenstein elsewhere, but not always in a manner that enhances either her credibility or that of her guide. On page 169 she writes:

> Kurds, Turcomans, Naim [*sic*] and other colonists arrived in Palestine around the same time as the Jewish immigration waves began. Eighteen thousand "tents" of Tartars,[207] the "armies of Turks and Kurds," whole villages settled in the nineteenth century of Bosnians and Moors and "Circassians" and "Algerians" and Egyptians, etc.—all were continually brought in to people the land called Palestine.

Footnote 207 reads: "Makrizi, *Histoire des Sultans Mamlouks*, II, pp. 29-30, cited in Frankenstein, *Justice*, p. 122." If we turn to R.A. Nicholson's *A Literary History of the Arabs*, we discover that Makrizi was born in 1364 and died in 1442. He is thus a dubious authority on matters of nineteenth-century population movement, though his work on the migration of Tartar hordes in the Middle Ages is no doubt beyond reproach. In view of Peters's assertions about material she has cited, we must assume that both she and Frankenstein made entirely coincidental blunders about the date and utility of Makrizi's work.

There would be something comical about Peters's ridiculous distortions if they had not been swallowed virtually in toto by what passes for our intellectual community, and if they were not exterminist in historical and political intent.

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CALVIN TRILLIN

While I was in Brazil, I found out about presliced bananas. The discovery had no connection with the prevalence of bananas in Latin America, although Latin America would provide some good location shots if we decide to make a movie of all this. It wasn't that I found myself in an awkward social situation and tried to break the ice by saying, "Hey, is this one of those banana republics I've heard so much about?" The subject of presliced bananas actually came up quite unexpectedly at the tag end of a gathering in São Paolo. We were discussing hard-boiled eggs at the time.

I had just explained to one of the other guests that I can blow a hard-boiled egg out of the shell about seven times out of ten. He responded by telling me that he could slice a banana without peeling it. You might say that we were in a bragging contest. I suppose I could have countered by saying that I can blow a hard-boiled egg out of the shell while standing on one leg—you'd be surprised how many people think that's more difficult than doing it with both feet on the ground—but he would have probably just tried to raise the stakes a bit by saying that he could peel an apple in one unbroken peel, a trick I consider to be of purely manual dexterity. Instead, I asked him how to preslice a banana. Escalation has to stop somewhere.

I realize that there are people who don't understand why I would be interested in presliced bananas—people who have never grasped the notion of pure science. "So what?" those people say when they read about some biologist who has discovered that boll weevils sweat. "What use is it?" If you grasp the notion of pure science, you can thirst for knowledge of presliced bananas for its own sake—although, as it happens, I was planning to use the knowledge to impress my daughters, who had shown indications of becoming blasé about the hard-boiled-egg trick ("Not again, Daddy"). I don't see the egg-blowing trick as part of the movie, by the way, except maybe as a sort of teaser before the credits.

Don't think that the diminished impact of the hard-boiled-egg trick has left us with no science around the house. We happen to be one of those families that has stimulating scientific discussions at dinner most nights. We have talked about whether saccharin draws ants. We have talked about what sort of tweezers might be used to remove the caffeine from coffee beans. I noticed, though, that the last time I raised the caffeine-removal question my older daughter just smiled. She didn't say, "Talking about tweezers reflects a misunderstanding of the entire concept" or anything like that; she just smiled. I needed a new trick.

I had already decided against some common trick of purely manual dexterity, like peeling an apple in one unbroken peel—a decision I reached after spending some time behind closed doors with a sack of apples and a paring knife. That's why I came right out and asked the man in São Paolo how to preslice a banana. He told me that you use a needle and thread. That surprised me. Just for a moment there, I let myself think that maybe caffeine is removed from coffee beans with a needle and thread, but I couldn't really see it. To preslice a banana, the man told me, you circumscribe the banana just under the skin, being careful to put the needle back into the hole it just came out of; after the final stitch, you pull both ends of the thread out of the original hole, severing the banana inside the peel. The banana remains unmarked. When people speak of the wonders of nature, the man in São Paolo told me, they should include the miraculous speed at which a banana skin heals over a needle hole.

I needed practice. By chance, I had to spend a week in Texas just after I returned from Brazil. If this is going to be one of those technicolor movies that goes from exotic setting to exotic setting, Texas would be good. First, you have an establishing shot of the vast Texas horizon, with the camera pulling back slowly to show a Holiday Inn. Then there's an interior shot: A man is sitting inside his motel room, going at a banana with a needle and thread. Occasionally, he grimaces; the needle has rubbed up against an old paring-knife wound. Then there is one of those shots of an airplane taking off. We see a plane full of businessmen—clicking their calculators, snapping and unsnapping their attaché cases. One of the businessmen turns to the traveler next to him. "I couldn't help noticing that you're sewing a banana," the businessman says.

"It passes the time," the traveler replies.

When I arrived home from Texas late one night, I handed my wife a banana. "It's presliced," I said.

"Oh, did the girls tell you about that?" my wife said.

"The girls?"

"They do it with a needle and thread," she said. "I think they learned it from that book *Fun 'n' Play for a Rainy Day.*"

"I learned it in São Paolo," I said. "São Paolo, Brazil."

"Well, it must be all around then," she said. She peeled the banana and started to eat it.

But that's no way to end a technicolor movie—with a grown woman eating a presliced banana. In the movie, the traveler would present his family with "some of these new presliced bananas from Brazil," provoking a stimulating scientific discussion about how Brazilian agronomists grow bananas presliced. Maybe workers tie strings around newly sprouted bananas, and as the bananas grow the strings cut through them, the traveler suggests. The strings are not noticeable because they are themselves made out of bananas—those kind of stringy things you sometimes pull off a banana before eating it. Other theories are offered. Then the traveler reveals that he is the one who presliced the banana. It's a trick. His daughters are impressed. They say that some people's fathers can only do tricks like peeling an apple in one unbroken peel. "Show us, Daddy!" they say. The traveler preslices a banana for his daughters. Then he does it standing on one leg. Fade-out.

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ARTICLES.

LETTER FROM TEXAS

H. Ross Went Seven Bubbles Off Plumb (And Other Tales)

MOLLY IVINS

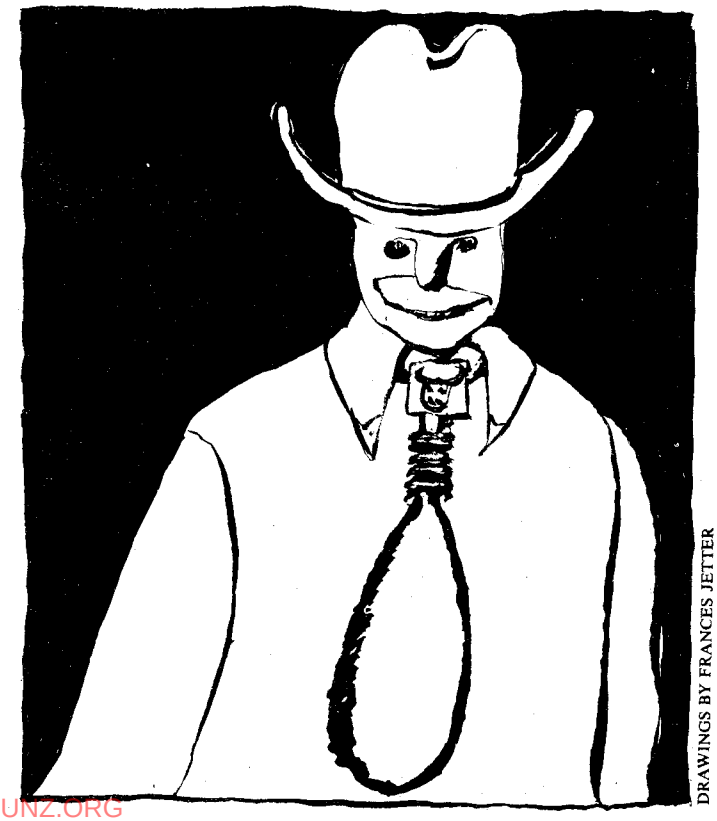
Well, our Attorney General is under indictment. He ran as "the people's lawyer"; now we call him "the people's felon." But it's just a commercial bribery charge; he should get shed of it. We all know there's nothing wrong with Jim Mattox but rotten personality. Meantime, over in the Legislature, the latest incumbent indicted was Senator Carl Parker of Port Arthur, brought up two weeks ago on charges of pushing pornography, running prostitutes and perjury. We feel this is the best indictment of a sitting legislator since last year, when Representative Bubba London of Bonham got sent up for cattle rustling. It's rare to find a good case of cattle rustling in the Lege anymore, so we're real proud of London. Happily, Senator Parker is unopposed, so we expect this to be the finest case of re-election-despite-trying-circumstances since 1982, when Senator John Wilson of LaGrange was re-elected though seriously dead. Several distinguished former members have been indicted of late, on charges ranging from misappropriation of funds to child abuse. We're running about normal on that front.

On matters cultural, when the World's Fair in New Orleans had Texas Week recently, they invited two of our biggest stars, Willie Nelson and Ralph the Diving Pig from San Marcos. Willie has been galaxy-famous for years now, but this was Ralph's first shot at international exposure, so we were all real thrilled for him. Ralph's the Greg Louganis of porkerdom.

We're having another bingo crackdown: we are big on busting grannies for bingo. If you bingo bad enough in this state, they'll put you in the Texas Department of Corrections, the Lone Star Gulag. Texas and California are running about even to see which state can put the most human beings in Stripe City. We got a three-strikes law here—three felonies and it's life—so we got guys doing terminal stretches for passing two bad checks and aggravated mopery.

T.D.C. is so overcrowded they were like berserk rats in there in the vicious summer heat. There have been more than 270 stabbings in T.D.C. this year. Judge William Wayne Justice, who, in my opinion, is a great American hero and, in everybody's opinion, is the most hated man in Texas, has declared the conditions in the system unconstitutional. Judge Justice continues to labor under the illusion that the U.S. Constitution applies in Texas. Just last year he de-segged a public housing project in Clarksville—almost twenty years after the Civil Rights Act—so the citizens started threatening to kill him again. Anyway, the prisons are being worked on; the Legislature passed some reforms because they knew if they didn't, Judge Justice would. He already made them clean up the whole juvenile corrections system. So now it's just a question of whether the reforms can beat the riot in under the wire.

We have also had educational reform, and it come a gullywasher. First off, our new Governor, Mark White, shows signs of intelligence above vegetable level, which means he will never make the list of truly great governors, such as Dolph Briscoe, the living Pet Rock. So Marko Blanco (all our politicians are trying to be bilingual these days, but as Agriculture Commissioner Jim Hightower says, it just makes most of them bi-ignorant) appointed H. Ross Perot to head up this committee to figure out what's wrong with the public schools. H. Ross took off like an unguided missile. I keep having to explain to foreigners that some loopy right-wing Dallas billionaires are a lot better than others, and H. Ross happens to be one of our better right-wing billionaires. This is assuming you don't make him so mad that he goes out and buys an army and invades your country with it. But he mostly does that to no-account countries full of tacky ragheads, so no one minds. Anyway, H. Ross decided everything was wrong with the schools—teachers, courses, books. The Board of Education had ruled that no one could teach evolution as fact in Texas schools, and



DRAWINGS BY FRANCES JETTER

Molly Ivins is the political columnist for the Dallas Times Herald.

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H. Ross said it was making us look dumber than the Luzbuddy debate team. Actually, he said "laughingstock." Then H. Ross went seven bubbles off plumb, crazy as a peach-orchard boar, and announced the trouble with the schools is TOO MUCH FOOTBALL. That's when we all realized H. Ross Perot is secretly an agent of the Kremlin; yes, a Commie, out to destroy the foundation of the entire Texian way of life.

The Legislature had a fit of creeping socialism and passed nearly every one of H. Ross's reforms, so now a kid can't play football unless he's passing *all* his courses, and he has to take stuff like math and English. Probably means the end of the world is close at hand. The Legislature even raised some taxes to pay for all this school stuff; first time they've raised taxes in thirteen years, so you see how serious it is.

Economically speaking, Texas is a very big state (it's real embarrassing to have to say that, but they make us learn it in school here). Most economists break it into six zones to report on what's going on. It's not unusual for Texas to be declared a disaster area for drought and flood simultaneously, and our economy is like that too. In the Metroplex, which was called Dallas/Fort Worth back before chairs became "ergonomically designed seating systems," there is just a flat-out boom. The area has technically achieved full employment, 3.5 percent un-. Its building boom should crap out before long, but its economy is almost recessionproof—insurance, banking, merchandising and defense contracts. The Centex Corridor (a.k.a. Austin and San Antone) is also Fat City; lot of high-tech firms coming in, supposed to be the new Silicon Valley. But Austin and San Antone are both mellow ol' towns, never wanted to be like Dallas or Houston. Fair amount of no-growth sentiment there, for Texas. But we reckon it's too late: both towns about ruint; gonna need separate books for the White Pages and Yellow Pages before long. The land sharks are in a greed frenzy, turning over sections every couple months for another $1 million, building all over the aquifer. There never was much around Houston or Dallas to crud up, but the limestone hills and fast rivers of Central Texas—that's a shame.

Contrarywise, the Rio Grande Valley's a disaster area. It's truck-farming country, mainly citrus, and also the most Third World place you can find in the U.S. of A. In fact, it's still feudal in some ways. The Valley was already reeling from the peso devaluation last year—we're talking as high as 50 percent unemployment in some Valley counties—when the big freeze hit right after Christmas and just wiped out the whole crop. Now the question's not how widespread unemployment is; it's how widespread hunger is, how bad malnutrition is. A real mess. The Governor and the churches have been great; the Reagan Administration, zero.

Also hurting real bad is most of West Texas. This drought has cut so deep the ranchers have even had to sell off their starter herds. Just nothing left. The Panhandle, the Plains, even in Central Texas, there's no pasture. A goddamn drought is just the sorriest kind of calamity. A flood, a hurricane or a tornado hits and then it's over, but a drought takes a long, long time to kill your cattle and your spirit, and gives you so many, many chances to get your hopes up again—in vain. You folks back East, your beef's going up considerable; we got nothing to start over with when this does break. Our farmers are bleeding to death. Mark White carried every rural (we pronounce that "rule") area in this state in 1982 against a Republican incumbent with more money than God. But one of the laws of politics is It Ain't a Trend Till You've Seen It Twice. The polls show Reagan winning Texas with 75 percent of the vote.

Politically, we've got more talent in statewide office now than in living memory: not a certified Neanderthal in the bunch, and the Treasurer, Ann Richards, is one of the smartest, funniest people in politics anywhere. Our populist Ag Commish, Jim Hightower, keeps us amused with his observations: "Why would I want to be a middle-of-the-road politician? Ain't nothin' in the middle of the road but yellow stripes and dead armadillos." (Tell the truth, I also had a great fondness for Hightower's predecessor, an entertaining linthead named Reagan V. Brown, who wanted to nuke the fire ants. Brown probably lost because he called Booker T. Washington a nigger, but there were extenuating circumstances: he called him a *great* nigger.)

Our Congressional delegation still boasts enough wood to start a lumberyard. We've got a helluva U.S. Senate race. In one corner is Phil Gramm, the former Boll Weevil Democrat, now a full-fledged Republican, named the most right-wing member of Congress by the *National Journal*. Man makes Ethelred the Unready look like a radical. And in the other corner, a 38-year-old liberal State Senator from Austin named Lloyd Doggett: smart, clean, hard-working Mr. Integrity, actually looks like the young Abe Lincoln. If you could jack up Doggett and run a sense of humor in under him, he'd be about perfect. Ever since I mentioned that in a column, Lloyd's been working real hard on his sense of humor.

Doggett's a long shot because there is an ungodly amount of right-wing money in this state, and no decent newspapers, except for the *Dallas Times Herald*. (I'd say that even if I didn't work for it.) Gramm is running a charming campaign, accusing Doggett of being soft on queers and Commies. That usually sells well down here. Doggett can get pretty nasty his own self, in down-populist fashion. Right now he seems to be concentrating on convincing the corporate types that Gramm's so far gone in ideology he doesn't have enough sense to protect the state's economic interests. We used to have a Congressman like that from Dallas named Jim Collins. The rest of the guys would be trying to sneak gas deregulation past the Yankees, and Collins would go into a diatribe about school busing. He didn't just miss the play; he never understood what *game* it was.

People always try to tell you how much Texas is changing. Hordes of Yankee yuppies have moved in, and we have herpes bars, roller discos and other symptoms of civilization. I think, though, maybe Texas is in a permanent state of *plus ça change*. While it is true that there are Texans who play polo and eat pasta salad, the place is still reactionary, cantankerous and hilarious. □

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NICARAGUAN ELECTIONS

The Reluctant Candidate

MARK COOK

Arturo José Cruz, the Reagan Administration's favorite Nicaraguan opposition leader, received a cool reception on his recent five-nation tour of Latin America. Cruz, who has refused to register as a presidential candidate in the November 4 elections until the government meets his demands for reforms, embarked on the tour to drum up support for his boycott.

According to diplomatic sources in Managua, leaders in every capital he visited told Cruz in no uncertain terms that since candidates from six other opposition parties are running, he should enter the race and that his demands (which had included "dialogue" with C.I.A.-financed mercenaries and de-Sandinistaizing the army) were not serious. They informed him that he could not count on their support for a continued holdout. Colombian President Belisario Cuartas Betancur, who is closer, politically, to Cruz than any of the other heads of state with whom he met, reportedly told the Washington-based banker that he would pressure the Nicaraguan government to allow Cruz's Coordinadora coalition of three right-wing parties to register late but that Cruz would have to reduce his demands.

When the humbled Cruz returned to Managua in mid-September, he announced he would insist on four (down from nine) conditions, to which the government readily agreed: locating voting booths as far as possible from military installations (the Sandinistas had never planned on doing otherwise); barring local Defense Committees from playing a supervisory role at polling stations (the government, never having proposed the committees' participation, has promised to allow poll watchers and to open voting registers for inspection); guaranteeing "genuine freedom of the press" (the government lifted censorship on all stories but those affecting military security); and providing assurances that parties would not interfere in one another's rallies (both Cruz's supporters and his opponents have thrown rocks at each other's demonstrations).

But Cruz then added a fifth condition—that the elections be postponed until January so he could have ninety days to campaign. That demand was flatly refused. The government pointed out that Cruz could have registered as a candidate at any time and charged that his request was prompted by the Reagan Administration, which wants to undermine the elections. The Sandinistas have been suspicious of Cruz ever since August, when one of his associates, Mario Rappaccioli, foolishly told reporters that Cruz does not intend to run and is interested only in discrediting the elections.

Mark Cook is co-editor of "Links," a newsletter on health issues in Central America.

The government is not expected to feel diplomatic pressure from Western Europe and Latin America to postpone the elections now that it has agreed to sign the draft treaty put forth by the Contadora group. The treaty provides for independently supervised elections in Central America and for the withdrawal of foreign advisers, and it prohibits foreign military bases. Washington was embarrassed by the Nicaraguan action. The State Department hastily reneged on its earlier commitment to the Contadora process, and its representatives told *The New York Times* that the Administration had only touted the treaty in the belief that Nicaragua would never agree to it. "Now they have, and we say we aren't satisfied," said one. "I'm not sure I would blame the Nicaraguans if they were confused."

If Cruz found it rough going in Latin America, he can expect at least as bad a reception on his tour of Europe this month. In recent interviews a high-ranking Western European diplomat in Managua has denounced Cruz, saying his refusal to participate in the election has cost him friends in Europe, while his ties to the Reagan Administration have hurt him in Nicaragua.

Washington has made open gestures of support for Cruz and the Coordinadora coalition. When a Congressional delegation visited Managua recently, U.S. diplomats disregarded any appearance of impropriety and set up a meeting between the legislators and Coordinadora representatives at the U.S. Embassy.

Cruz is given no chance of winning the November elections if he does enter the race officially. The Coordinadora showed how weak its base of support is when it tried to organize a boycott of the voter registration drive at the end of July. In the first two days of the drive the turnout was so massive despite the boycott (ultimately 93.3 percent of the eligible population registered) that Cruz's supporters hastily changed their line and said they too favored registration.

Although no one would know it from reading U.S. newspapers, seven parties are contending in the elections. They are: the government-backed Sandinista Front; the large Independent Liberal Party, which is made up of middle-class technical and professional people and which advocates a "Swedish model" for Nicaragua; the Democratic Conservative Party, which historically represented the rural landowner interests but which is seeking to broaden its base in the middle class; the Popular Social Christian Party, a left-leaning Catholic organization; the Socialist Party, a Marxist-Leninist group with a base in the working-class neighborhoods of Managua and the coffee-growing district around Matagalpa; the Communist Party, which split off from the Socialists during the Somoza regime; and the Popular Action Movement, a party formed in the early 1970s, which advocates total expropriation of capitalist property.

The Sandinistas' handling of the upcoming balloting has drawn considerable support in social-democratic circles in Western Europe and Latin America. Former Venezuelan President Carlos Andres Pérez told the Managua opposition newspaper, *La Prensa*, that at a meeting of thirty party leaders from the Socialist International, "We unanimously indicated our full agreement and total satisfaction" with the

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election plans. The British Labor Party shadow cabinet representative on Third World questions offered similar praise, as did West German Social Democratic leaders. If that backing continues, the Sandinistas can legitimately ask whether it is the Nicaraguan government that is being isolated or the Reagan Administration and its friends. □

COMMUNITY CLINICS

Providing Care to Those Who Need It

TOM FRIEDEN

In health care as in other areas, the Reagan Administration claims to have new ideas. Upon closer examination, however, its proposals turn out to embody a familiar reliance on the "magic of the marketplace." The Administration expects big business to provide efficient low-cost care through for-profit hospitals, renal dialysis units and "emergicenters," corporate clinics which advertise treatment for everything from sore throats to broken bones.

But the private sector will merely accelerate the trend toward expensive, hospital-centered care. Already, the emphasis is on maximizing profits rather than making decent care available to all. If the trend continues, only the affluent and those with health insurance will be served.

A look at the Great Society's community health centers program suggests that there is a better way. Although not without problems, the clinics established under that program have brought low-cost health care to people in areas that had been abandoned by the traditional system.

In the mid-1960s more than one hundred health centers were built in areas that were medically underserved, and in subsequent years 500 more were constructed. They are funded by a medley of Federal, regional, state and local programs, as well as by unions and private charities. Administrators from the Department of Health and Human Services insure that each clinic complies with Federal fiscal guidelines. The centers set their fees on a sliding scale based on income and family size. In order to make clinics responsive to local needs, community leaders and organizations are encouraged to take an active part in governing them. This has the added advantage of promoting a high utilization rate and therefore financial stability. Avoiding the kind of high-tech, hospital-based care that has become the norm, clinics emphasize early detection and preventive medicine.

Despite gains made under the community health centers program, lack of access to medical care continues to be a serious problem, affecting not merely a few unfortunate individuals who have "fallen through the safety net" but large segments of the population. Thirty-four million Americans are not covered by Medicare, Medicaid or health insurance. Six million of those are children who live in families with incomes below the poverty level. Many more have limited insurance coverage. Thirty percent of the country lives in rural areas, where doctors are scarce.

In the spring I visited a successful community clinic in Mud Creek, Kentucky, in the heart of coal-mining country. A new building was going up, and a doctor and several nurses worked in trailers at the construction site, seeing hundreds of patients every day. The plywood walls were covered with posters about breast-feeding, adult education, legal services, mental-health programs, community meetings and a patients' bill of rights. A social worker arranged for the distribution of vegetable seeds, and a small pharmacy filled prescriptions, charging a minimal price to low-income patients.

The Mud Creek Clinic is active in education, nutrition, housing, local development, child care, family planning, mental-health care and employment services. Eula Hall, one of the facility's prime movers, describes it as "a community center where people get a lot of assistance; it goes beyond health care. We work with abused children and spouses, with people who have problems with water supply—any problem that people in the community face. When people need to do something about the school situation or whatever, we're always here to assist them."

Although not an initial goal of the program, the broad focus of many clinics like Mud Creek's was a direct result of the involvement of community members who insisted on addressing economic and social issues that affected the area's health. The resulting orientation, beyond being politically progressive, is far more effective in improving health than are doctors' services alone.

But the clinics are in danger of folding, and new ones aren't being built because of the Reagan Administration's budget cuts and the difficulties in the economy. The Farmers Home Administration no longer provides low-interest loans for the construction of clinics, and funding from the Department of Housing and Urban Development for clinic-building has also dried up. Medicare and Medicaid payments, which constitute a large portion of the clinics' operating income, have fallen off, due to stringent reimbursement regulations imposed by the Administration. The Tennessee Valley Authority, which had helped finance a number of clinics, now provides only minimal support. The United Mine Workers of America had funded clinics and hospitals throughout Appalachia for twenty-five years, but financial troubles and the long strike of 1977 forced it to end its programs. Over the past six years the union's clinics have closed or been converted to private doctors' offices. Other unions have gone bankrupt and thus cannot pay capitation fees to clinics. High unemployment, especially in coal-mining towns, has resulted in a dramatic increase in the number of patients who are unable to pay clinic fees. Private charities, to which Reagan looks to pick up the slack

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left by social spending cuts, fund only a minuscule percentage of clinics, and because of the reduction in Federal matching grants, they have abandoned plans for funding new clinics in areas that need them.

The Administration justifies the cutbacks as an effort to make community health facilities self-sufficient—to wean them from Federal support. But for most clinics, self-sufficiency is impossible. If an area was affluent enough to support a profitable clinic, it would have private doctors in the first place. Cutbacks have not only reduced budgets, they have changed the clinics' focus. Without money for such nonmedical services as nutrition programs, health education and patient transportation, clinics have no place for community leadership and evince no concern for social issues that affect health.

Budget slashes were fatal to a nutrition center for the elderly in Rossville, Tennessee, despite eighteen months of private and community efforts to keep it going. Food was donated by a church in Memphis; the woman who coordinated the program worked ten months without pay; and in one of the poorest counties of the United States, residents found money to pay for gas to transport patients to and from the center. Square Mormon, a community leader, is proud of what was achieved. "We ran the program for eighteen months and let people know what could happen, what could be done," he said. "It was the best nutrition site in Fayette County. We demonstrated that we could use people who hadn't been trained and run as good a program as people who have been trained can. Better, in fact." But voluntarism was not enough. Without the center the elderly, many of whom have hypertension and diabetes, are more likely to suffer strokes, diabetic comas and heart attacks.

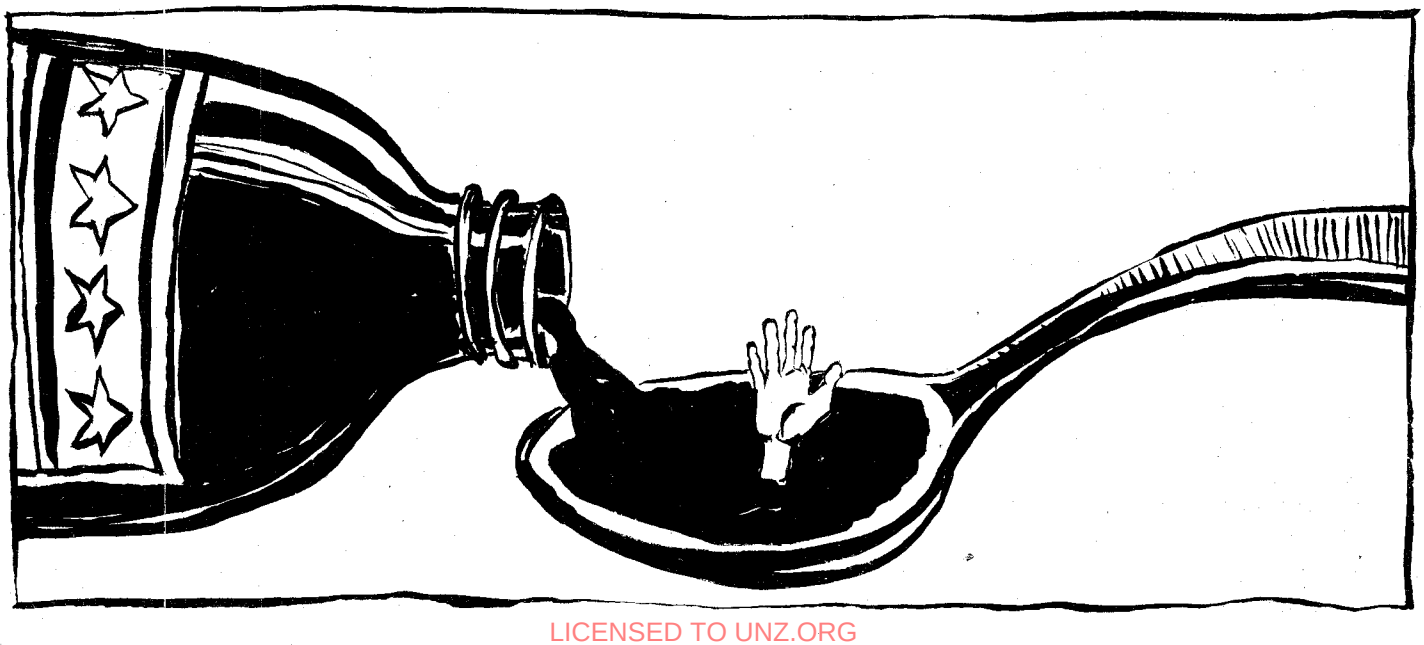
The Administration's emphasis on "decentralization" has actually taken power from grass-roots groups and given it to reactionary and racist local governments. The health center in Mason, Tennessee, is a case in point. As in many towns in the South, white residents there, who make up a distinct minority of the local population, control the Town Council. They therefore control Federal, state and local funds. Since the Council determines the town limits and the number of building permits, blacks will never be in the majority within the town proper.

A loan from the Farmers Home Administration funded a sleek solar-heated health clinic in Mason. It was to be administered by a local board of directors made up largely of blacks active in community projects. The building was completed just as Ronald Reagan came into office. Because of uncertainties about the future of the National Health Service Corps (N.H.S.C.), which provides recently graduated doctors to clinics that need them, no physician was assigned to the clinic for more than a year. When the N.H.S.C. finally offered a doctor, who was black, the Town Council, which holds title to the building, rejected him. Instead, the Council leased the building, for $1 a year, to a white doctor for use as a private office. Most blacks, who make up over 60 percent of the local population, stopped going to the doctor because of his high fees. Unable to support his practice, he has since left. The Mason Health Clinic is now vacant.

The Administration's cuts threaten the future of the N.H.S.C., which provides full scholarships to medical students who, in return, make a two-year commitment to work in an area that is underserved. This system has its drawbacks: after two years, committed doctors are forced to leave to make way for the next inexperienced scholarship recipients. The rapid turnover has caused some clinics to lose the confidence of their clientele. Also, young doctors spend a considerably longer time examining patients than do experienced physicians, which means higher costs and lower efficiency, and makes continued and substantial Federal funding of clinics necessary.

These problems could have been avoided if the government had been willing to pay salaries to physicians and nurses who were willing to work in underserved communities. While this was done in some places, funding was eliminated by Reagan, mainly because it smacked of "socialized medicine."

N.H.S.C. scholarships, meanwhile, have virtually ceased. Recipients still in medical school have had their aid cut and



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have been offered a Private Practice Option. It encourages them to set up an office rather than work in a clinic. Although the doctors are required by law to practice in an underserved area and treat poor patients at a discount, the regulations are not enforced and reports of noncompliance are widespread.

In five years the last of the N.H.S.C. scholarship recipients will have finished their training. Many clinics may well be forced to close for lack of doctors and nurses. Already, the shortage of doctors has given recent graduates increased bargaining power, which they have used to demand higher salaries, shorter hours and more freedom to make clinic policy. One scholarship recipient told a state placement officer, "I won't go to any town where I can't get my BMW serviced."

Administration policies have also eroded community participation. The laws establishing community health centers mandate that at least half the directors on their boards be people who use the clinics and live nearby. But the boards have chronically lacked knowledge, power and control over clinics. Richard Couto, director of the Center for Health Services at Vanderbilt University, which has fostered numerous clinics throughout Appalachia, blames the boards' ineffectiveness on misguided policy: "We put all of our resources into funding and training [doctors] for what was essentially a two-year commitment and did nothing for the people from the community who already had a commitment and were going to be staying in the communities. No workshops, no training, no education—nothing."

When they were started, clinics were often vigorously and sometimes violently opposed. Politicians were wary of grass-roots groups, doctors feared the loss of business, and welfare agencies wanted to keep control of programs for the poor. Medical societies denounced clinics as "socialistic," and denied clinic doctors membership and admitting privileges to hospitals. Where local leaders, unions or community organizations were strong they controlled clinics and forced them to address broader health issues. Where they were not, local opposition, budgetary limitations and bureaucracy left clinics underused, unrespected and financially insecure. Democratic participation requires more than opening boards of directors to local people; it requires that they be trained and provided financial support for health-related programs that they decide to pursue.

Administrators from Health and Human Services have forced many boards to reorganize. Instead of training community people to take control, the government has decided to favor people who are used to making decisions. Poor, grass-roots board members have been removed in favor of judges, lawyers and other "leading citizens." This is supposed to result in more "competent" boards. Indeed, it may be more cost-efficient, but it signals the end of the clinics' community orientation.

Health centers, like all institutions, operate according to imperatives. The emergicenter, which offers no-wait prescriptions to doctor shoppers who can pay with cash or major credit card, embodies the for-profit orientation favored by Reagan. Clinics under community control offer a compelling alternative: health care that addresses the social causes of illness and the political causes of the unequal distribution of medical care. □

Romero

(*Continued From Front Cover*)

that he will testify before the commission if asked, and that he can link d'Aubuisson to the crime.

There was disagreement among Senators about whether d'Aubuisson's supposed connection to the Romero assassination should be included in the unclassified version of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence's just-completed investigation into Salvadoran death squads, scheduled for release last week. Democrats charged that Republicans who control the committee fear that if d'Aubuisson's true role is made public, it could hurt the re-election chances of Senator Jesse Helms, whose strong support for the Salvadoran rightist has been raised as an issue by his Democratic opponent, North Carolina Gov. Jim Hunt. Helms has defended d'Aubuisson, calling him a "deeply religious" man and saying that he would disavow him if there was any "credible evidence" linking him to the death squads. Helms has said he doesn't require evidence that would stand up in court, and charges that when he sought "specifics" from Administration officials in the past "they backed down."

Administration sources told me privately that their reluctance to provide "specifics" to the Senator arose out of fear that U.S. intelligence sources might be endangered if their identities were made known to Helms's violent right-wing friends in Central America. Other sources said that the Senate Intelligence Committee shared that concern in choosing which staff aides would work on the report. Helms's recent revelation of classified information that the Central Intelligence Agency was funding the Christian Democrats and his assertion that U.S. Ambassador to El Salvador Thomas Pickering acted as "paymaster" may have provided psychological encouragement to Salvadoran rightists in their abortive plot to kill the Ambassador this spring.

The classified version of the Senate report, which runs hundreds of pages, analyzes U.S. knowledge and procedures regarding Salvadoran death squads, based on cable traffic and internal reports from the C.I.A., the State Department, the Defense Department, the National Security Agency and the Justice Department. A Congressional source who read some of the cables said that what he saw lays out a convincing case that d'Aubuisson is a "main player, the one who directed and controlled" death squad operations. One person familiar with the report said that it shows that the rightist leader is "involved up to his armpits" in the Romero and other killings. "If he lived in this coun-

Craig Pyes is on the staff of the Center for Investigative Reporting in Washington. Laurie Becklund of the Los Angeles Times *contributed some of the information used in this article.*

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try, he'd be sent to the gas chamber a hundred times over."

The classified report does not attempt to resolve the question of who killed Romero. A different account is provided by each agency reporting on it, and the identity of the triggerman varies. Each account is based on a different source, "each in a position to know," according to people who have read the classified version. All the accounts agree, however, that d'Aubuisson had a hand in the assassination.

Information linking d'Aubuisson to the Romero killing was first published in April 1983, by this reporter in the *Albuquerque Journal* and by Laurie Becklund in the *Los Angeles Times* as part of a joint investigation. Those accounts were based on the investigation conducted by the U.S. Embassy in San Salvador, whose findings are included in the Senate classified report. A still undisclosed C.I.A. account of the assassination, also considered to be credible, contradicts some of the information in the embassy's report. But the embassy version is important because it comes primarily from a known source whose information proved reliable in the past; because the informant said he participated in the plot; because incidentals of his story were confirmed by an embassy employee; and because all those he named, as well as the source himself, are believed by U.S. intelligence to have been deeply involved in death squad activities.

The circumstances surrounding the embassy's investigation have since been amplified by interviews with U.S. officials and with Congressional sources who have access to confidential State Department cables, and by conversations with Salvadoran military and government officials, including sources close to d'Aubuisson. Because of the sensitivity of the material, all those interviewed requested anonymity.

The U.S. Embassy received its first account of the killing in mid-November 1980, according to former Ambassador to El Salvador Robert E. White in testimony before the House Western Hemisphere Subcommittee earlier this year. He said a "particularly brave and resourceful American diplomat" had met with a Salvadoran Army officer who had participated in the plot and who said he had witnessed d'Aubuisson order the killing. (D'Aubuisson has many times denied his involvement.) The cable reporting this meeting describes the Salvadoran informant as being of unknown reliability. But U.S. officials came to regard him as "highly reliable" because he subsequently identified the National Guardsmen who killed four American churchwomen in December 1980. Those he named were later convicted by a Salvadoran court—a lonely example of justice being meted out to military men for their participation in death squads.

Embassy personnel came to refer to the informant as Killer, and that's how his telephone calls were announced by cheery-voiced secretaries. "He was a ruthless, evil guy, quixotic, tough and brutal," recalled a U.S. official who was stationed in San Salvador. Although Killer's motivation for talking to the embassy remains unclear, those familiar with his reports said he resented d'Aubuisson and others in the pay of the wealthy families. Killer said the death squads were necessary because government restraints on the security forces compelled soldiers to take extralegal action. When he mentioned the Archbishop, he referred to him casually and unceremoniously as "that fellow the priest." He said he gave bullets from his own gun to the officer chosen to carry out the assassination, so that he might participate symbolically in the act.

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the extreme right. The plotters hoped the killing would touch off disorder and panic, which would enable them to seize power and stem the social and economic reforms enacted in early March 1980. "That was a real important time for the right," explained a U.S. diplomat familiar with the Romero killing. "Their backs were up against the wall. They were pushing and kicking. It was like a shark in a frenzy."

Killer said he had been contacted in El Salvador by d'Aubuisson, who in early 1980 moved his paramilitary organization to Guatemala. There d'Aubuisson received financial assistance from supporters of Mario Sandoval Alarcón, chief of Guatemala's ultraright National Liberation Movement (M.L.N.), and from wealthy Salvadoran exiles living in Guatemala and Miami. Those funds were used to sustain a political-military organization in El Salvador capable of carrying on what d'Aubuisson referred to as a "Guatemalan-style" anticommunist campaign, similar to the one in which tens of thousands of Guatemalans had already perished.

A ledger from d'Aubuisson's paramilitary organization, belonging to his bodyguard, Capt. Alvaro Saravia, was seized when d'Aubuisson was arrested for treason by government soldiers at a farmhouse outside San Salvador six weeks after Romero's assassination. Virtually ignored by U.S. intelligence, which did not consider right-wing death squads to be a priority until 1983, Saravia's notebook records in accountant's detail thousands of dollars received and disbursed by d'Aubuisson's organization during the time leading up to and immediately following the assassination. It itemizes payments to hard-line army officers linked to death squads; requisitions of supplies for assault teams, including the types of weapons and the estimated number of bullets to be used; purchases of arms, bulletproof vests, silencers, night-vision scopes, forged identification cards and Guatemalan license plates (for undercover operations); names and flight information for the airborne cavalry of civilian and military pilots who operated an extensive courier and smuggling network between private air clubs in Guatemala and El Salvador; and names and telephone numbers of key operatives, including those of the officer and the triggerman believed to have gunned down the Archbishop.

Another person prominently mentioned in the Saravia notebook was one of d'Aubuisson's most trusted aides, Capt. Eduardo Alfonso Avila, who later claimed he helped plan the Romero assassination. U.S. investigators have identified Avila as a principal figure in the death squad network. He once told an Argentine intelligence officer that his specialty had been executing people by insulin injection. In addition to or as part of his terrorist activities, Avila served with the army's general staff. He was also a contact of a former U.S. defense attaché in El Salvador. After he was implicated in the November 1980 failed bombing attempt against liberal army chief Col. Adolfo Arnoldo Majano, Avila was banished to the Salvadoran Embassy in Costa Rica, where he ran intelligence operations.

A cable transmitted to Washington from the defense attaché in Panama in May 1982 relates the bizarre story of how Avila came to confess his part in the Romero assassination. While vacationing on Contadora Island off the coast of Panama, Avila suffered what one might interpret as an existential crisis. He had fallen in love with a young Costa Rican prostitute who had learned too much about his past, and he couldn't decide whether to kill or marry her. The cable says he tried to kill her but failed, then in remorse attempted to overdose on Valium but failed, then called for help.

When help arrived, Avila, reminiscent of Lady Macbeth, told the person he was having hallucinations of a bloody figure in black "crawling from the floor" of the San Salvador Sheraton Hotel—a reference to the January 3, 1981, killing of José Rodolfo Viera, director of the Salvadoran agrarian reform program, and his two American aides, Michael Hammer and Mark David Pearlman. Queried about what he knew of that incident, Avila reportedly said, "I have killed them as I have killed many others." When pressed for details, the cable says, Avila admitted that "he personally planned and had two others assist him in the killing of Archbishop Romero. He indicated that he had used a dark car on this occasion and that he had spent three months planning the execution."

Avila's statement that the killing had been planned for three months is not contradicted by any other evidence attributed to the embassy. During that time there were several threats and failed attempts against the Archbishop's life. Also, Ernesto Panama, who worked closely with d'Aubuisson in 1980 and served as his press spokesman during the last election, said that as part of their "psychological war effort" they had tried to discredit Romero, who was known to suffer from a nervous disorder. "We tried to find out about when Monsignor Romero was in the cuckoo's nest in Costa Rica," Panama said. "We tried buying the records but we couldn't. They wanted too much money." Civilian members of d'Aubuisson's inner circle, who spoke on background only, also admitted that in the months leading up to the assassination, they blew up the Catholic radio station, which had broadcast the Archbishop's homilies, bombed the Jesuit-run Central American University, delivered death threats to priests and machine-gunned the Jesuits' residence.

On February 24, 1980, a month before his assassination, Romero announced in his Sunday sermon that he had been notified that his name was on a list of those to be killed the following week. His personal diary—quoted in *The Word Remains: A Life of Oscar Romero*, by James Brockman—shows that he was aware that the military was carrying out what he termed "special warfare," killing not only suspected leftists but also their families to stop the spread of "communist" ideas. Each Sunday until he died the Archbishop read the names of those arrested, murdered and "disappeared" by government forces (at that time the toll was upward of 500 a week). He called on the Duarte faction of the Christian Democrats who remained in the ruling junta to resign and stop "concealing for the sake of international public opinion the bloody repression of the people." In a letter to President Jimmy Carter he called for the cessa-

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tion of American military aid to the Salvadoran government and pleaded for the United States not to involve itself directly or indirectly in Salvadoran affairs. Romero seemed to seal his fate during his last Sunday homily, March 23, when he appealed directly to the enlisted men carrying out the killing to disobey their orders. But by then the preparations for his assassination had passed the point of no return.

Killer told an embassy official that on or about March 22 d'Aubuisson summoned about a dozen active-duty military officers to a safe house in San Salvador and announced that a decision had been made to assassinate Romero. There was so much vying for the honor of carrying out what was regarded as a "sacred duty," an embassy source explained, that it was determined "the only fair way to do it was by lot . . . as though it were some sort of competition for a prize."

All those present at the meeting "were people who worked together officially or unofficially," the source continued. They were part of "that network of really, really bad guys who identified with each other, their ability to be valiant. . . . There's a certain mystique around you if you're macho, and a little cruelty adds to that." Among those reportedly present were National Guard Capt. Victor Hugo Vega Valencia, a d'Aubuisson crony who was later exiled to Mexico as military attaché because of his involvement with the extreme right. Saravia's notebook records that Vega received a $1,000 payment the day after the assassination. Another alleged participant in the death lottery was Lieut. Francisco Amaya Rosa, a National Guard officer. Lieutenant Amaya and his confederate Lieut. José Rodolfo Isidro López Sibrián, an intelligence officer with the Guard and partner with Amaya in a Central American car-theft ring, have been described by U.S. officials as "action men" for "the most efficient killing machine in the National Guard." Ambassador White told the House Western Hemisphere Subcommittee that Lieutenant Amaya drew the winning lot. Amaya is said to have chosen a favorite triggerman (a "dog," as they are known) to do the shooting.

Late in the afternoon of March 24, in an appearance previously publicized in the newspapers, Romero celebrated a memorial mass for the mother of a journalist friend at his small chapel at the Cancer Hospital. As he was concluding the ceremony, a dark car drove up to the door, and a single shot was fired from it at Romero inside. The bullet struck him close to the heart, and he slumped to the floor. A short time later he died on a table in the emergency room of a nearby hospital.

Until Killer's first report, eight months later, the U.S. Embassy had few details about the assassination plot. It was not until late 1981 that U.S. diplomats learned the name of the alleged triggerman. According to embassy accounts, this happened when Killer was shown a copy of the Saravia notebook by a Foreign Service officer. While leafing through it he stopped at the name "Musa" and is said to have told his handler, "That's the guy who shot the priest."

Embassy sources said that after conducting his own investigation, the Foreign Service officer learned that Musa was Walter Antonio Alvarez, a 27-year-old former National Guardsman from Apopa, a small town outside San Salvador. The telephone number listed by his name in the notebook belonged to a downtown department store called Almacenes Pacífico, where Alvarez was employed. Alvarez spent most of his spare time, however, with present and former Guardsmen who served as *golindrinas*, or foot soldiers of the paramilitary far right.

Alvarez's role as triggerman is one of the weaker pieces in the embassy's investigation, according to U.S. officials, but his short history indicates that he was well qualified for the job. Additional information about Alvarez was obtained by this reporter from one of d'Aubuisson's personal pilots, who has proved a reliable source in the past. The pilot had access to d'Aubuisson's inner circle and was in a position to hear things. While evasive about the Romero assassination, he said he believed it was carried out by a low-level military officer "who decided the job had to be done and nobody would have the guts to order it. You know, one of those people who had to be in charge of one of those death squads." He said he remembers somebody mentioning the

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name of the triggerman, but it wasn't Alvarez. The pilot's version is somewhat consonant with what other sources told me had been reported by the C.I.A. and was contained in the Senate Intelligence Committee's report.

His description of Alvarez is worth repeating, because Alvarez is somewhat typical of the death squad "dogs" used by the higher-ups to kill. The pilot said the former military man earned extra money as the bodyguard of one of the owners of Almacenes Pacífico, who valued him not only because he was an excellent marksman who "had the guts to kill somebody" but because he was happy to do it. (There is no information linking the owners of Almacenes Pacífico to the Romero assassination.)

The pilot said he frequently met Alvarez at the private air club in San Salvador, which was a gathering place for leaders of the paramilitary right. While their bosses were discussing politics and plans, the pilot said, he, Alvarez and other bodyguards would sit around boasting about their prowess and misdeeds in order "to gain status."

"This guy [Alvarez] was a real hothead," the pilot recalled. "He was just mad as hell" because the *Guardia* was being restrained and the military wasn't acting tough enough. Once, when Alvarez and his employer were watching a leftist demonstration from a terrace of the department store, Alvarez persuaded the owner to let him take a potshot at one of the protesters. The pilot recounted, without indicating the source of his knowledge, how Alvarez pulled out his gun—a small pistol with a four-inch barrel—and fired at a demonstrator in the street. "Picked him off right from the terrace, with a .38 Special! That's some shot. And he got this guy, and boom! And he was jumping up and down." Then he added:

> He's probably the one person I ever met in this whole movement who probably was really off his head . . . the type of human being that likes to kill, period. He was very shifty-eyed, very unstable. You knew there's something inside the guy that's dangerous and could explode any minute—his eagerness, his eyes, the fire burning in there.
>
> Apparently he was working on the side with one of those military teams and got killed in some operation. . . . All of a sudden a lot of people were dead before I knew when or how.

One theory held by U.S. and Salvadoran sources is that Alvarez was killed for talking too much. A brief investigation by an embassy official, reported in a December 1981 cable, said that in late September, while Alvarez was watching a match between the Almacenes Pacífico soccer team and another club, a group of men thought to be plainclothes police officers hustled him out of the crowd, threw him to the ground and shot him. An item in a San Salvador newspaper dated September 28, 1981, reports that municipal authorities found Alvarez's bullet-riddled body on a road in the capital. It said further details were lacking.

At the House hearings earlier this year, former Ambassador White charged that the State Department had cables from an eyewitness source (Killer) linking d'Aubuisson to the Romero assassination, and accused the Reagan Administration of covering up the information. The State Department then announced that the source was dead. But when White checked with his sources in El Salvador he learned that the department's statement was false, and he said he gave Killer's real name to the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Although there are differing accounts within the intelligence community, the preponderance of the evidence indicates that Archbishop Romero's killing sprung out of a tightly woven conspiracy involving military officers, guns for hire and wealthy civilians: the traditional Salvadoran confraternity that has always acted above the law. Yet despite Duarte's high-sounding resolve to bring to justice those responsible for the crime, a resolution of the case appears doubtful. The president's commission has no authority to act on its findings, which must be turned over to the attorney general, a member of d'Aubuisson's Arena Party. And, observed former Ambassador Rivas-Gallont, even in the best of circumstances "to convict someone in a murder case in El Salvador there needs to be a witness who saw you pull the trigger, saw the bullet hit the guy and then watched the victim fall down and bleed to death. This is difficult in a normal murder case—imagine this one!"

It does not appear that the Salvadorans will receive much help from the United States on this one. The official U.S. line on the assassination is to treat it as an internal Salvadoran affair. "We won't touch it with anything," explained an embassy source in El Salvador. "There is no U.S. support for it. If the Salvadoran government asks for confidential [cable] traffic, it will be difficult for us to cooperate because we won't disclose our sources."

The State Department's reluctance to tackle d'Aubuisson on the Romero case has at least been consistent. The Foreign Service officer who unearthed many of the details about the killing was ordered to stop his investigations shortly after his discovery of Musa, according to department sources. They said it was too dangerous. In the spring of 1982, when a Congressional committee holding hearings on the suitability of granting d'Aubuisson a visa requested all the department's files on the rightist leader, the cables linking him to the Romero assassination were withheld. Now, in the interest of not upsetting volatile right-wing forces in the Salvadoran government, the State Department is opposed to making public any conclusions in the Senate's report linking d'Aubuisson to the death squads.

From the point of view of day-to-day policy, appeasement of the violent right-wing faction headed by d'Aubuisson may seem logical, at least until other democratic forces are strengthened. But this is the logic of desperation. Four years ago, d'Aubuisson allegedly tried to seize power by throwing over the card table in the middle of the game—assassinating the highest-ranking church official in the land. Four months ago, U.S. intelligence sources learned that a group of people tied to d'Aubuisson was going to try it again—attempting to kill U.S. Ambassador Pickering and possibly President Duarte. Assassination teams were formed, guns were collected, overt actions were taken in furtherance of that plan. The plot was foiled by some fortunate tips and the persuasive power of the U.S. government. Next time we may not be so lucky. □

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BOOKS & THE ARTS.

The Radical's Romantic

ANN SNITOW

WOMEN: The Longest Revolution. *By Juliet Mitchell. Pantheon. 335 pp. $9.95.*

Juliet Mitchell, whose essays are collected here, is a provocative English theorist, a Marxist and feminist, whose interests have often anticipated those of the women's movement or run beside them as a gloss. In her personal history, Marxism came first: she was one of very few women in the cluster of Marxist intellectuals who wrote for *New Left Review* in the 1960s. One suspects those men were surprised when their dutiful colleague began to use the classical tools of Marxism to write "Women: The Longest Revolution," published in *New Left Review* in 1966 and reprinted as the first essay in this volume.

If she had written nothing else, Mitchell would still hold an honored place in the history of feminism for this extraordinary essay—a detailed, fully developed feminist analysis of the complex, coordinated layers of female oppression, written, as she says, "before there was a women's movement in Britain and before I was aware of feminist stirrings in the United States."

> As a student I had read Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* and thought it brilliant but somehow applicable only to some inexplicable predicament of French women. I was active in the New Left, where we were then preoccupied with the countries of the Third World. It was Franz Fanon's argument from his Algerian experience that women—a conservative force—should be emancipated only after a revolution that provoked my indignation and tied in with my personal experience. . . . In the Marxist meetings on the politics of the Third World, in the University common rooms I frequented, where were the women? . . . Why this sort of common experience led so many of us to feminism at that particular time . . . I do not really know.

Ann Snitow is co-editor with Christine Stansell and Sharon Thompson of Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality *(Monthly Review Press).*

Mitchell wrote first for her "New Left friends and colleagues"—presumably men who were for the most part content with woman-as-conservative-force (though this is the kind of thing Mitchell never says, preferring instead to pull punches and stay friends but also to analyze coolly and to speak with the authority that comes of distance). She began by criticizing modern socialism for its conservative, puritanical attitude toward women. As if struck with amnesia, progressives have often abandoned their usual principles when discussing women and have fallen into idealism or into the fallacy of identifying women with nature. Mitchell dug to the roots of these lapses in Marx himself: he recognized the family as a historical institution, not a given of nature, but saw women as subsumed by this institution, as creatures without a multilayered history. For the bourgeois family, Marx said, "boredom and money are the binding link." But in his text women's relation to this odd intersection remains obscure.

In reaction, Mitchell began to separate out the elements that comprise the identity, woman. She isolated four different zones of meaning and action: production, reproduction, sexuality and the socialization of children. In her radical argument, the ideological unity, the family, dissolves, leaving its functions and needs floating in an anxious ether of possibility. Women are women because a variety of factors in their situation work together, defining each other, keeping each other in place.

In the final section of "Women: The Longest Revolution," Mitchell identified the weak spots in the contemporary construction, woman. In the areas of production, reproduction and socialization she found either no change or effective cooptations of change. She also saw that change was most likely in the area of sexuality. In spite of the recent backlash, her sense then that sexual life was changing rapidly, that "the dominant sexual ideology is proving less and less successful in regulating spontaneous behavior," still sounds accurate, as does her judgment that such shifts in sexual mores can mean little while production, reproduction and socialization are untouched by sexual revolutions.

Given the difficulty of picking apart the interwoven strands of women's oppression and the difficulty, too, of converting changes in family structure, child rearing and work into gains for women, Mitchell asked at the end, "What, then, is the responsible revolutionary attitude?" Ah, words of 1966—grandiose, obnoxious, yet to the weary supporters of a Fritz Mondale, deliciously muscular. Her answer, of course, was that one must begin with clear demands, for example, for changes in public education, but that one must finally change everything, all the parts that now parade as a finished unity.

I now find this essay, which so influenced me and many of the women I knew in the feminist movement of the early 1970s, too mechanistic, with its overconfident talk of functions, layers, forces, structures. Mitchell's definitions and boundaries are rigid at the very moment when her essay calls for a less narrow economism, a more dynamic idea of the variables. Still, it is to her eternal credit that she knew her own intellectual tradition to be static. Persistent, rational, inexorable, she argued that leftists must accept "as a complement" to their work on production "a whole set of non-economic demands"—that the "rational" cannot sum up the possibilities of human social creativity.

If the cultural complexity of women's oppression is now a feminist theorem, that is in part a measure of Mitchell's success. As she says, she doesn't quite know why elements present for years suddenly catalyzed into a movement, but she is certainly one of those who recast the pervasive, drifting voice behind the old "woman question" into a modern, left idiom. For English feminists particularly there is probably little in this famous essay that has not become commonplace. But for Americans, "The Longest Revolution" still has a more practical and immediate relevance. Here, where Marxist paradigms can never be taken for granted in the thinking of progressive movements, where one group of feminists is claiming that pornography is the essence and cause of the oppression of women while another is ebullient over the nomination of Geraldine Ferraro, the idea that women's oppression is complexly con-

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structed still sounds fresh, useful, worth the price of the book.

After "The Longest Revolution," Mitchell wrote the feminist classic, *Woman's Estate*, which expanded on the themes of her first precocious essay; then, in 1974, she brought out *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*, another primary contribution to a quickly evolving feminist theory. There she criticized feminists for too quickly jettisoning the big men of psychoanalysis as patriarchs. She warned that without an analysis of the unconscious, feminism can never adequately understand the formation of female identity. Brilliantly—and, at the time, bravely—she insisted that women's consent is a part of patriarchy. To lessen that consent, feminists will need to understand the inner as well as the outer paths toward becoming female.

In contrast to Mitchell's kinetic earlier work, the present volume of essays is a retrospective of her evolution. One marvels over the date at which a particular essay was written, but now, in 1984, one rarely feels newly singed. Mitchell is self-conscious about this, of course, carefully identifying in the headnote to each piece its year of conception, its intellectual genesis, its historical moment. She assumes, I think rightly, that such a narrative of her own development will echo larger themes in the history of recent political thought.

But problems arise. The intellectual narrative is maddeningly incomplete, a bit wooden in parts, not, perhaps, a narrative at all. The different context of each essay is named, but these mental and physical locales remain isolated, their significance asserted, not demonstrated. In her introduction, Mitchell claims a continuity for the essays: they are all about the Western preoccupation with growth, about how "we become ourselves—men or women." This general theme is certainly there, but the volume doesn't fuse our ideas about it into a whole larger than the parts. The sections remain apples, oranges and pears: the first collects her pieces about feminism, written for the most part before 1975; the second, some earlier literary essays on the novel; the third, her more recent work on psychoanalysis (which, since she has become a practicing analyst, preoccupies Mitchell).

Reading through, one is as likely to be struck by discontinuities as by resonant connections. For example, Mitchell writes often about child development, but she speaks as if there are two,

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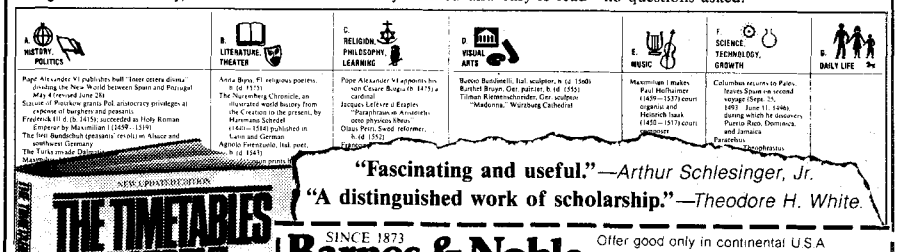

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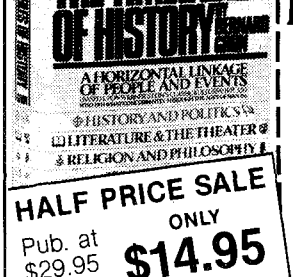

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quite different babies. The first is the baby that needs day care, the baby that is the mother's burden and that sets the relations of the genders aslant. The second is the inner baby of Freud and Lacan, unassuageable, decentered, raging on into adult life with only a slim chance of attaining conscious recognition of the laws that decree the shape of its endless dissatisfactions. Though of course these babies are one and the same, they never seem to inhabit the same train of thought. One is the activist's baby; the other, the psychoanalyst's. There are important reasons for distinguishing between them: feminism grows ever more sophisticated about the theoretical difficulties of seeing public and private as one. Society's baby and the raging inner baby can never fit together with the sure certainty once implied by "the personal is political." Nonetheless, feminism's theoretical and social task has always been integrative, as in theory Mitchell's work strives to be. What, then, does day care look like for the Lacanian baby? An unfair question, of course. But at moments in this collection Mitchell's abstractions drive one to just such excesses of irritation.

But to be fair, neither continuity nor an unalloyed newness should be necessary to justify a collection that serves as an archive of so much of our recent intellectual history. What of the separate essays, then, on their own terms? There are many fine ones, and I suspect readers with very different needs will use and enjoy them.

My own favorites are idiosyncratic choices: I like best the few that show a flicker of private passion, that are written either eloquently (the wonderful one on Ibsen) or with unusual persuasiveness (the lucid introduction to Lacan, full of the suspense of his quest for the real Freud and the drama of how he rescued that true Freud from the bland, upbeat, American version).

Wherever it appears, the subject of motherhood seems to put a flash of color into Mitchell's otherwise monochromatic style of argument. Whenever she speaks of motherhood, she resists its definition as a totality. Lovingly, appreciatively, she quotes Charlotte Perkins Gilman: "Family unity is bound together with a tablecloth . . . anybody can be a mother. An oyster can be a mother. The difficult thing is to be a person." Mitchell's sense of the difficulty of being a person pervades the

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volume as it does all the best radical feminist work.

She is serious and useful on central theoretical questions such as the value of the concept of equality ("Women and Equality"); or on central historical ones such as the eighteenth-century transformation of the ideal of femininity ("*Moll Flanders*: The Rise of Capitalist Woman"). Above all, she is always willing to take on the big men—Marx, Engels, Mill, Meredith, Dickens, James, Defoe, Freud, Lacan—something feminists have understandably but regrettably been leery of doing. She offers us much thereby, and pays her own kind of price: Mitchell is more likely to find male heroes than to look closely at women writers. Still, it's a pleasure to see her at ease with such difficult mentors, granting them their greatness without being overawed by their authority (or hermetically committed—as so many theorists now are—to their vocabulary). She exploits in the interests of feminism the special rights of the token woman, attending closely to the words of male authors without paranoia or loss of nerve. She gets to play the part of the rational rather than the hysterical woman (two concepts she explores interestingly here and there), and her one major essay on a woman, a surprising and original study of Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, offers Brontë this highest praise: she was a rational romantic.

These words, I suspect, characterize Mitchell herself. It is the analytical historian joined with the unsentimental psychologist that she values in Brontë. Minus the poetry, these are Mitchell's strengths, too. □

INFLATION

Here in this place still furnished
for romance, here where nothing
has changed but the prices, we meet
once more over drinks, running up
a bill of things that were. Free
to discover whose fault
it was, hands tangle with new
regret. I twist a stem of glass,
wonder about desire,
am unable to answer still.
"We could be alone somewhere,"
you say but I choose this public
intimacy. Afterwards, you'll pay
the check as you always did,
remark, perhaps, that everything costs
too much. And I'll agree. It does.

Carolyn Gaiser

Nowhere to Hide

CAROL FLAKE

NOWHERE TO RUN: The Story of Soul Music. *By Gerri Hirshey. Times Books. 384 pp. $17.95.*

How do you spell soul? It used to be spelled R-E-S-P-E-C-T, according to Aretha Franklin and Otis Redding, who gave many of us our first lessons in the phonetics of soul music. When soul-singers got the blues, they didn't cry and moan; they shouted, they danced, they protested, they preached. It was a matter of pride. And eventually soul came to mean more than standing up for yourself in a romantic entanglement; it came to mean, in James Brown's lexicon, "Say It Loud, I'm Black and I'm Proud."

For young white fans, soul music was a revelation. "Fa-fa-fa-fa-fa" came to them as wisdom in an unknown tongue. They might not have owned a pair of high-heeled sneakers, and they might not know their booties from a hole in the ground, but they did know great dance music when they heard it. Most white fans, in fact, can point to a certain concert, to a certain song that came as a kind of epiphany, a realization that their culture was lacking some vital ingredient that even Elvis Presley couldn't supply.

Gerri Hirshey describes such an epiphany in her introduction to *Nowhere to Run: The Story of Soul Music*. An appearance by James Brown on *The Ed Sullivan Show* led Hirshey to bury her Beatle magazines and focus her fantasies on becoming one of Brown's Famous Flames. Brown represented "a special freedom," a "total release from any kind of nagging self-consciousness." Michael Jackson, who was himself branded for life by Brown's special form of stage transcendence, called it "getting out of myself." Inaccessible to agnostics or lukewarm believers, soul was a form of possession, of release, first learned in church. As Hirshey describes it, Brown and his fellow soul-singers "blew a huge hole in *Leave It to Beaver*-land."

Soul music, with its sweaty, hard-working heroes, brought black and white cultures together in new ways. It was a genre that drew upon the deepest wellsprings of black experience, yet remained amenable to white producers, songwriters and fans. It was an open-hearted music, thriving on the sense of hope and opportunity in the air, stirring black pride even as it extended a hand to white audiences. But unlike earlier forms of rhythm and blues, which were absorbed by the white rockabilly revolution, it was not a form easily appropriated and diluted by white singers. (The Righteous Brothers are a case in point.) Who could hope to emulate James Brown's nightly resuscitations, Aretha's swooping improvisations, Wilson Pickett's intimidating growls?

What cataclysm, then, ended the great soul era, which coincided roughly with the decade of the 1960s? Critic Peter Guralnick has suggested, plausibly, that the music was too singular in style and purpose to adapt to changing times and trends. Musical tastes change, and black audiences tend to stay at least a dance ahead of white audiences. Guralnick theorizes that Aretha Franklin's success in the late 1960s, both artistic and commercial, was bound to supersede anything she could do after it. There could be no second or third acts after her quintessential sessions for Atlantic Records. He suggests further that the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. was too much of a shock for a music predicated on good faith to absorb.

Hirshey simply treats the decline of soul as an inevitability, like the fall from Paradise. Hers is a nostalgic view of the history of black music, a view perpetuated by many blues and soul aficionados who would like to stop time with Robert Johnson's "Love in Vain" or with Aretha's "I Never Loved a Man." Indeed, songs that seem so timeless do make it hard to believe in musical progress. For the purist who rates black music on a scale of raw authenticity, the supreme artist is the instinctual genius, the primitive savant who must suffer in order to create. (And the further into the boondocks the musicologist must travel to interview him or her, the better.)

Consequently, in *Nowhere to Run*, the great soul-singers loom as tragic heroes, artists whose talents could not make the transition into the silicon age

Carol Flake is the author of Redemptorama: Culture, Politics and the New Evangelicism *(Anchor/Doubleday).*

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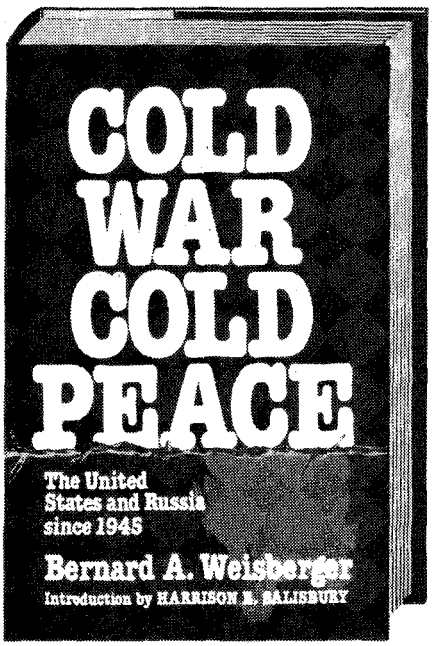

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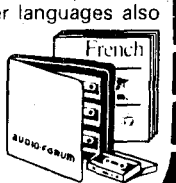

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of disco and techno-funk. Slickness, then, became the snake in the garden. But that theory, however appealing, underestimates the musical sophistication and calculated theatrics involved in the creation of a soul persona. It also underestimates the considerable number of serpents already at large in the world of soul music. There were worse casualties during that era than James Brown's bloody knees. A number of the record company executives responsible for the popularity of soul were also the most manipulative and greedy exploiters; some were known to use booze and drugs to keep wayward artists under control. A well-known executive quoted approvingly by Hirshey once told me, concerning a famous singer with whom he had worked, "She sang better when she was down and out."

Fortunately, Hirshey's misty-eyed treatment of the music does not turn her idols into talking relics; *Nowhere to Run* is a lively book. If she is not the most erudite of musical analysts, she manages to avoid the windy pontifications that rock specialists tend to inflict on their readers. (Since she is not a member of rock's righteous brotherhood, she has received a few of the customary potshots aimed at the uninitiated.) She does indeed make a number of errors in the book, such as identifying Naomi Neville, the name under which Allen Toussaint produced records for Irma Thomas, as singer Aaron Neville. And some of her images seem a bit strained: Cissy Houston's backup vocals are said to fit "around Aretha's tasty filling with the snug but airy lightness of a blue-ribbon piecrust." But she is a superb interviewer, and she knows when to get out of the way. She sets the scene—at a Chinese restaurant with James Brown, on a shopping spree with Solomon Burke, in a church basement with Cissy Houston—and lets the legends talk.

And how they talk. Wilson Pickett, for example, sustains a long analogy between musical styles and cars:

> You harmonize; then you customize. Now what kid don't want to own the *latest* model? And tell me now, what black kid in some city project can afford it? . . . Anyhow, you got no cash for music lessons, arrangers, uniforms, backup bands, guitars. No nothin'. So you look around for a good, solid used chassis. This be your twelve-bar blues. . . . And once you get known for something special, well, now, *that* would be your hood ornament.

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It is Pickett who best expresses the soul-singers' frustration at the fickle tastes of audiences who consider them obsolete: "Stuck us in a closet in moth-balls like some raggedy-ass Nehru suit." Who would ever have thought that James Brown's cape could be discarded for a single spangled glove? □

Blunt Instruments

RICHARD TILLINGHAST

THE DEAD AND THE LIVING. *By Sharon Olds. Alfred A. Knopf. 80 pp. $13.95. Paper $6.95.*

GOD'S MISTRESS. *By James Galvin. Harper & Row. 77 pp. $12.95. Paper $6.95.*

A brutalized childhood is the storm center around which the poems in Sharon Olds's second book, *The Dead and the Living* (the 1983 Lamont Selection of the Academy of American Poets), furiously revolve. The actors in the drama are indelibly drawn. First the grandfather:

> Every night, as my grandfather sat
> in the darkened room in front of the
> fire,
> the liquor like fire in his hand, his eye
> glittering meaninglessly in the light
> from the flames, his glass eye baleful
> and stony,
> a young man sat with him
> in silence and darkness. . . .
> ("The Guild")

The young man, "the apprentice/who would pass his master in cruelty and oblivion,/drinking steadily by the flames in the blackness,/that young man my father" is pictured in these poems, convincingly and repellently, as a drunken bully who terrorized his family:

> We played dolls in that house where
> Father staggered with the
> Thanksgiving knife, where Mother
> wept at
> noon into her one ounce of
> cottage cheese, praying for the
> strength not to
> kill herself.
> ("The Pact")

Even the sister has a role to play in this horrific household:

> Hitler entered Paris the way my
> sister entered my room at night,
> sat astride me, squeezed me with her
> knees,
> held her thumbnails to the skin of my
> wrists and
> peed on me. . . .
> ("The Takers")

Olds's attempts, however, to establish political analogies to private brutalization, as seen in the first line of this last passage, are not very convincing. For one thing, Sylvia Plath did the same thing earlier, and did it better. In "The Departure," Olds asks her father, "Did you weep like the Shah when you left?" And in "The Victims," she writes:

> Then you were fired, and we
> grinned inside, the way people grinned
> when
> Nixon's helicopter lifted off the South
> Lawn for the last time.

This becomes a mannerism, representing political thinking only at the most superficial level. Was Nixon ever really thought of as a father, for example, with the instinctual trust and love that implies? Were his crimes ever as intimate and damaging to any of us as child abuse would be? There is, in short, less political insight here than meets the eye.

While reading this book I found myself thinking both of Sylvia Plath and of *Wuthering Heights*. Olds has without a doubt been influenced deeply by Plath's poetry. Love and hatred of the father are major preoccupations for both writers, and both equate violence within the family with violence within the state and between nations. But there are important differences. The father in Plath is essentially a fantasy, the creation of a mind hovering on the edge of madness. Olds is, one feels certain, recording an actual story. The thrill of horror one often feels while reading Plath is produced less by some apparently real-life situation than by the workings of a brilliant mind out of control: "the autobiography of a fever," as Robert Lowell put it. But *The Dead and the Living*, like Olds's first book, *Satan Says*, has the chastening impact of a powerful documentary. It is for this

Richard Tillinghast's third book of poems, Our Flag Was Still There, *was published this year by Wesleyan University Press. He is currently directing the M.F.A. program in creative writing at the University of Michigan.*

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reason, too, that the comparison with *Wuthering Heights* breaks down. Sadism within the family, the spectacle of the victim becoming the victimizer—those are present in both works. But because there is no romantic masochism in Olds, or—more accurately—none that has not been closely examined, her book is not a family romance but a photographic view of a family tragedy.

While her first book was impossible to ignore because of its raw power, *The Dead and the Living* is a considerable step forward. Her earlier impulse was to turn her pain and anger into myth, analogy, metaphor, as in "Love Fossil" from *Satan Says*—perhaps because of the difficulty of facing it head-on:

> My da on his elegant vegetarian ankles
> drank his supper. Like the other
> dinosaurs
> massive, meaty, made of raw steak,
> he nibbled and guzzled, his jaw dripping weeds and bourbon,
> super sleazy extinct beast my heart dug
> for.

This grips and shocks, yet its tone of hysterical excess reflects something of the psychic damage that the speaker has sustained. In her new book the repulsion has lost none of its intensity, witness a detail such as "the black/ noses of your shoes with their large pores." But the poet—and presumably also the person one glimpses fleetingly behind the work—seems more in control of the experiences that have clearly obsessed her for most of her life. In both her books, that obsessiveness is a strength and a weakness. Even in the second, many readers will feel overwhelmed by Olds's dogged insistence on reliving and rethinking her childhood traumas.

She must have sensed as much herself, because this book moves—perhaps a bit too schematically—through sections titled "The Dead," "The Living" and "The Children," from the past into the present. Olds is a keen and accurate observer of people. Still bearing the scars if not the wounds of childhood, she is not prone to sentimentality: "It's an old/story—the oldest we have on our planet—/the story of replacement," whereby as the daughter grows up, she replaces her mother. Sharon Olds is a tough, clear-eyed survivor.

God's Mistress, by James Galvin, is the winner of the open competition in this year's National Poetry Series. Galvin's style is characterized by the strikingly direct statement, often at the beginning or toward the end of a poem, the literary equivalent of the preemptive strike: "There is another kind of sleep,/We are talking in it now," or "What happens is nothing happens," or "I'll tell you what the soul is made of:/More dust." The rhetorical force of these statements derives from their boldness, and they are a challenge to the reader's understanding. But in the subtle give-and-take of reading, a writer who challenges in this way runs the risk of being rebuffed with "So what?" or "I don't believe you." The first line of "The Importance of Green" has the rhetorical suddenness I have mentioned—"Small towns are for knowing who's poor"—but the plain sense of the line is at best a half-truth.

Still, this is an attractive book with some memorable poems in it, such as the three-page "What Holds Them Apart." The poem has a Western spaciousness and a sense of human aloneness in the natural scheme of things that has traditionally been the gift of poets like Robinson Jeffers, William Everson, Gary Snyder and Richard Hugo. Here,

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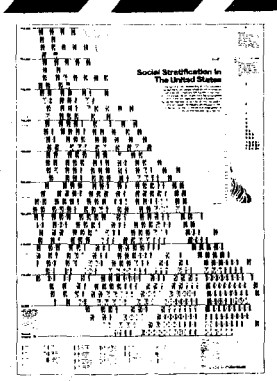

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seen through the boy narrator's eyes, is the poem's main character, Lyle, a jack-of-all-trades and a loner ("Lyle's name means *the island*,/but he doesn't know that")—the type of Westerner who arouses mixed and often hostile feelings in the urban East:

> He prefers to work alone.
> He used to have a family,
> but they're gone.
> When he isn't haying he's
> building things
> by hand.
> He makes tools to make tools to
> make things like
> hay barns and violins and muzzle-
> loading guns. . . .

This probably seems like a form of romanticism to readers who live in cities and pay other people for essential goods and services. But Galvin says something important here about the relationship between skilled work and independence, and about a boy's dream toward manhood. The ending is worth quoting at length:

> I shade my eyes and see a redtail
> hawk circling the
> deep blue and sun above us.
> I'm trying to say the kind of thing
> a man would say.
> I put down this stone and offer,
> *That hawk*
> *up there sure has it easy.*
> Lyle doesn't even look up.
> He looks
> at me.
> He pushes the glasses up on his nose
> and turns back to
> work.
> He says,
> *Easy, but hungry.*

James Galvin has a voice and a world, perhaps the two most difficult things to achieve in poetry. His world is the West that exists not on film or in the ski-lodge condos of Vail and Aspen, but in the lives of those who live and work in the outback, who, as Galvin puts it, "haven't heard the West is over." His laconic, understated voice can be heard in lines like these:

> This morning I hoofed out. It was
> cold as two sticks.
> There should be snow by now.
> The ground has had enough. It's
> anvil-hard.
> It won't be accepting any more death
> till spring.
> ("Whistle")

An imagination is at work here, an imagination that can describe a mine shaft as "one man's monument to hard luck, an obelisk of air pointing straight down" and a house as "a flower made of timber." Why then, does a writer with such strengths allow himself to write in the following "neo-surrealist" period style?

> down where you can imagine the in-
> comparable
> piety of the schoolbus,
> the wherewithal of bees,
> down where you can be a drawer full
> of dust
> as night comes on under full sail,
> and the smooth rain,
> in its beautiful armor,
> stands by forever.
> ("To See the Stars in Daylight")

Anyone who has spent a semester in the Brand-X Poetry Writers' Workshop could have written those lines in his sleep. It's a pastiche of Mark Strand and W.S. Merwin and a dozen others at their most facile. "Smooth rain" and "beautiful armor" are too bland to think about. The same could be said of the anaphoric stanza structure ("down . . . down . . . ") and the formulaic "heightening" kicked into operation by the word "forever." James Galvin at his best (and that best is very, very good) would set those lines up on a fence post, like an old tin can, with the Grand Tetons as a backdrop, and shoot them full of holes. □

Durable Tales

TIMOTHY SERGAY

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO CHEGEM: Being the Further Adventures of Sandro of Chegem. *By Fazil Iskander. Vintage. 407 pp. $10.95.*

"The nation that has Uncle Sandro," declares the Abkhazian Prince Emukhvari in Fazil Iskander's *The Gospel According to Chegem*, "will never perish." With the publication in English of this second and final volume of Iskander's wry epic, *Sandro of Chegem*, America gains not only Uncle Sandro but all the vitality and wisdom of Iskander's Caucasian homeland, Abkhazia, a tiny Soviet republic on the east coast of the Black Sea.

Iskander writes in Russian and lives in Moscow, where only about 20 percent of *Sandro*, his major work, has passed the censors. The entire novel has been published in Russian only in the West, by the late Carl Proffer and Ellendea Proffer's Ardis press. The novel relates the long and graced life of Uncle Sandro, which spans the history of his own peasant clan; of his mountain village, Chegem; of Abkhazia; Russia; "and all the rest of the world as it is seen from Chegemian heights," from the 1880s to the 1960s. Sandro is Chegem's premier *tamada*—"toastmaster," or elected head of table. He is thus a master storyteller, an "indefatigable drinker," "expert in human nature" and among the most responsible custodians of Abkhazia's elaborate system of customs. Through Sandro and his relatives, we learn about Chegem's mythology, its ebullient spirits and the severity of its moral life.

Susan Brownsberger has once again translated Iskander's relaxed prose into the most engaging and uncontrived English we could hope for. The completed epic is an exuberant celebration of the integrity of national cultures, which Iskander observes in their twilight, passing irretrievably into the colorlessness of the modern state. As he writes in the preface to both volumes,

> In idealizing a vanished way of life, we are presenting a bill to the future. We are saying, "Here is what we are losing; what are you going to give us in exchange?" Let the future think on that, if it is capable of thinking at all.

The subtle question of how much of Iskander's mythology reflects the true mythology of Abkhazia, and the simpler question of how much of his Chegemian history actually occurred, are, we soon sense, not to be asked. Several stories (especially those of war and blood vengeance) are perfectly sober and realistic; many others are obviously tall, lovingly embellished and generally unperturbed by the miraculous. In an episode from the early 1930s, Sandro's father, Khabug, ritually strikes the ancient walnut Prayer Tree with an ax, and the tree bellows a ghostly warning: "Kum-khozzz!" (the Abkhazian pronunciation of the Rus-

Timothy Sergay is a graduate student of Russian language and literature at the University of Michigan.

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sian *kolkhoz*, "collective farm"). Khabug is perplexed not because the tree spoke but because "he had expected the deity to give a more complex, more mysterious reply, which he would have to interpret over and over. This was too clear, and therefore terrible." The cities and places Iskander names are for the most part real, and historical figures—Stalin, Beria, Nestor Lakoba—appear. But the truth Iskander expresses in belles-lettres is itself more art than history or "experience"; it is "the poetry in the life of the people. That is what matters."

In suppressing the publication of *Sandro*, the Soviet literary establishment has proved once again the shortsightedness of its censorship. As Carl Proffer has written, a fitting Soviet publication of Iskander's work might have made the West truly envious. It is, nevertheless, not surprising that the book has been suppressed in the author's own country. Iskander's critique of Soviet society can be as gentle as an ironic concession to official literary guidelines or as powerful as the portrayal of Stalin in the first volume as a Belshazzar, slogans for extermination campaigns crystallizing in his mind as lines of poetry might in the mind of a decent man.

Our first reaction to *Sandro* in the West might be to understand Iskander's epic as the story of the long struggle for survival of Abkhazia's peasant way of life against the expanding cruelties and folly of the Soviet system. But it would be a mistake to consider *Sandro* primarily political or dissident literature. There is a universally human lament in the background of Abkhazian life, even in the novel's most beatific passages:

> But this is getting sad. So it goes—you begin with laughter and end in tears. . . .
>
> Why is the voice of gaiety stilled? O Russia, answer me! She doesn't answer. Uncle Sandro, answer me! Sometimes he does.

Iskander's protest is aimed at existential, not political, conditions. It is not Soviet history as such that overtakes Chegem; it is historical time itself. Like Milan Kundera in *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Iskander protests the irreversibility of linear time and the disappearance of the cyclical time that the anthropologist Mircea Eliade has identified with archaic cultures. The eternal, cyclical return of things gives moral solidity to human life, which is otherwise defective and terrifying, as well as weightless, empty, improvised and irresponsible. Kundera introduces *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* by proposing "the moral perversity of a world that rests essentially on the nonexistence of return, for in this world everything is pardoned in advance and therefore everything cynically permitted." He concludes with an elegy to the animal paradise of repetition: "Human time does not turn in a circle; it runs ahead in a straight line. That is why man cannot be happy: happiness is the longing for repetition."

In Iskander's Abkhazia, return takes the negative forms of the blood vendetta and the assurance of divine punishment for sins, and the positive form of national customs. The entire system guarantees that "a man doesn't end with himself" and that a nation's people can feel that "their country did not begin yesterday and will not end tomorrow. That way it's cozier for them to live in eternity, and easier to defend their soil." For Iskander, the vanishing of Abkhazia's peasant life is the story of countless cycles of familiar human experience spinning out their last melancholy turns, overcome by intolerable novelties:

> This was the strange and new thing. . . . For some reason [Abkhazian boys] were all ashamed to be goatherds, when their fathers and grandfathers had never been ashamed.
>
> . . .
>
> The corruption of time, rising up from the lowland towns, was reaching Chegem—now secret, now obvious, but most importantly, unstoppable.

Of course the flow of time, no matter what myths and practices a culture develops to endure it, is irreversible. Nostalgia for what time can never return has been part of the Abkhazian ethos since the distant, miraculous time of Jamkhoukh, Son of the Deer, Abkhazia's mythical hero and founder of its national wisdom. To Chegemian sensibilities, the present—again as Eliade observes of archaic cultures—is always defective:

> "Oh, the time we stand in," the Chegemians like to say, apropos of anything. This expression, depending on how it is uttered, has a multitude of nuances, expressing various degrees of hopelessness. In all these nuances, time is invariably viewed, or I should say felt, as an element that flows but is not subject to us. . . . We only stand

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> and wait in it, as in a stream—the stream may get stronger and roll over our heads, or it may suddenly disappear beneath the soles of our feet.

And so, in the 1930s, "the wave of collectivization rolled over the mountain village of Chegem." The Chegemians held fast and "waited out" the "rotten time" of Stalinism. Customs do not prevent the linear flow of history; they console and strengthen a culture against it. When their cycles are broken, time itself dries up and becomes meaningless: "What does it matter what year you're living in if you know for a fact that time stopped long ago in your country?" When the brute mass and inertia of society become stronger forces than repetition and continuity, mere civilization replaces culture and meanders into the future. "People preserve custom to stay strong," one of Iskander's characters remarks, "but why does a great nation need custom? They're strong as it is."

But this is getting sad, as Iskander would say. His concerns in *Sandro* are serious. Like Kundera's, they are broader and deeper than the anti-Soviet polemicism to which the West often confines its discussion of the Soviet world's émigré or censored writers. But for all its Abkhazian gravity, *Sandro* is a delight to read. Tragedy and pessimism alternate with bemused, Dickensian observations, and there are frequent thrills of transcendence occasioned by the ordinary: a faithful mule, Turkish coffee semisweet, the contemplation of another's happiness. The sentimentalism is never far from irony and subtlety. Iskander has been true to his idea of "real humor," which he described in his introduction to an earlier work, *The Thirteenth Labor of Hercules*:

> I believe that to possess a good sense of humour one must reach a state of extreme pessimism, look down into those awful depths, convince oneself that there is nothing there either, and make one's way quietly back again. Real humour is the trail we leave on the way back from the abyss.

And so we begin in tears and end in laughter. The village life of Chegem, the "might and beauty" of its "moral sky": these may finally vanish from the Caucasus. But thanks to Iskander, they have been preserved in a fanciful and elegiac epic of real humor. Abkhazians have been famous since the first century B.C. for their extreme longevity. Perhaps it shouldn't surprise us to learn that Abkhazia itself will live forever. □

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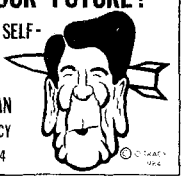

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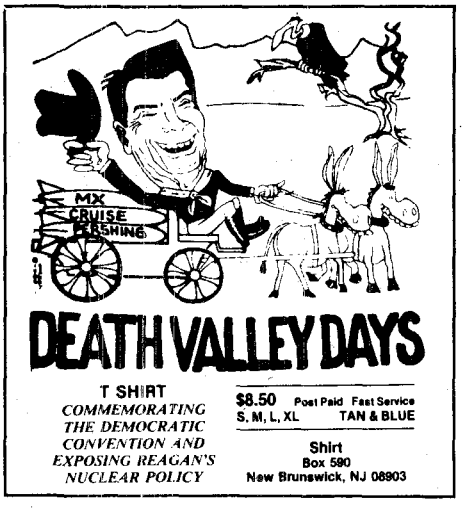

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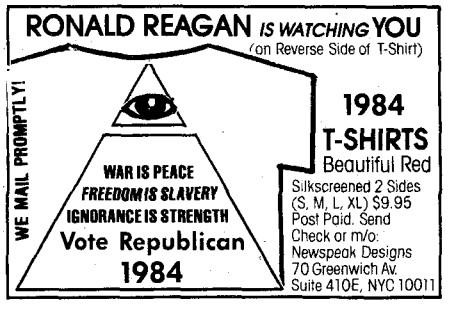

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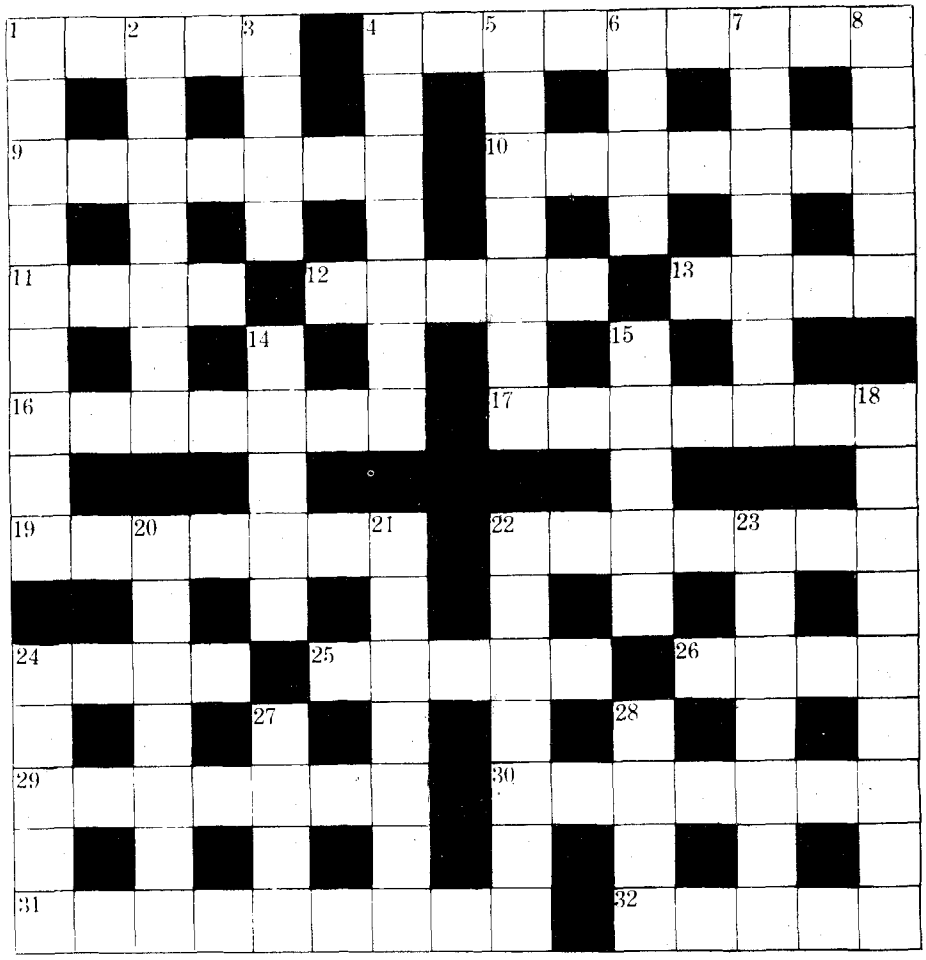
C	■	P	■	F	■	G	■	E	■	O	■	E	■	E
T	H	E	L	O	N	G	■	L	I	A	I	S	O	N
S	■	R	■	O	■	E	■	A	■	D	■	■	■	E
■	W	I	N	N	E	R	■	W	A	S	H	E	R	S
P	■	N	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	N	■	S
R	E	G	A	T	T	A	■	P	R	A	I	S	E	■
O	■	■	■	R	■	L	■	R	■	R	■	L	■	A
T	A	K	E	A	L	L	■	A	R	M	B	A	N	D
R	■	I	■	M	■	O	■	N	■	E	■	V	■	D
A	U	T	O	M	A	T	I	C	■	N	A	I	V	E
C	■	E	■	E	■	S	■	E	■	I	■	N	■	R
T	O	D	D	L	E	■	A	R	R	A	N	G	E	S

Crossword Puzzle No. 2026

FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1 As to one type, Ida is comparatively sweet. (5)
4 One of those things that gave meaning to "trivial" could be important to motorists. (9)
9 The thief is in the jug, according to the sailor, and that's the end of it! (7)
10 With a will, as they say! (7)
11 It might be a short version in the same book, possibly preceding "One Club" . . . (4)
12 . . . and one might have to, if using a bidding convention. (5)
13 Obviously such a company is not shaky. (4)
16 A large number of snakes used to climb, perhaps. (7)
17 Ladies might wear this out, and in a revel! (7)
19 Offers something like auxiliary vessels for those who take care. (7)
22 Supposedly they are loudspeakers compared with the things that are crossed here. (7)
24 Circumstantially connected, in certain music. (4)
25 and 20 down How certain runners live according to strict army routine. (2,3,7)
26 Such a stratagem is sure awkward! (4)
29 Supports things with the legs spread and the rest let loose. (7)
30 Answered the representative shortly, but didn't tell the truth. (7)
31 Gently shut up what reputedly talks of what some have to pay for silence. (4,5)
32 Morse might be this as well as Dotty—it's such a simple song! (5)

DOWN

1 Take a taxi to the river and allow one to ride in it. (9)
2 It's partly made, if I educate it and get highly exalted! (7)
3 Make quite a hole in a lot of paper! (4)
4 One sometimes does to eggs and children, if fond of them. (7)
5 This sort of oration is usually found north of the border. (7)
6 What did I do to this in *The Night Before Christmas*? I threw up! (4)
7 Lots of people might stand for this, but something must have been good! (7)
8 King had one sort of made about right! (5)
14 You might do this to your notes up and down! (5)
15 Looks like an entrance of stone! (5)
18 You'll never expect to see this today, but Kipling referred to all our 24 across of this. (9)
20 See 25 across
21 One could find this "by a nose" but it might make the sauce. (7)
22 It's hell at first when it goes astray around it! (And such a nuisance to clean!) (7)
23 Though one looks deep into your eyes, it isn't necessarily love! (7)
24 The plate offering might be black, but has a uniform sound. (Things might have an inclination to do so.) (5)
27 Stop watch in part. (4)
28 It's not really used for digging up potatoes! (4)

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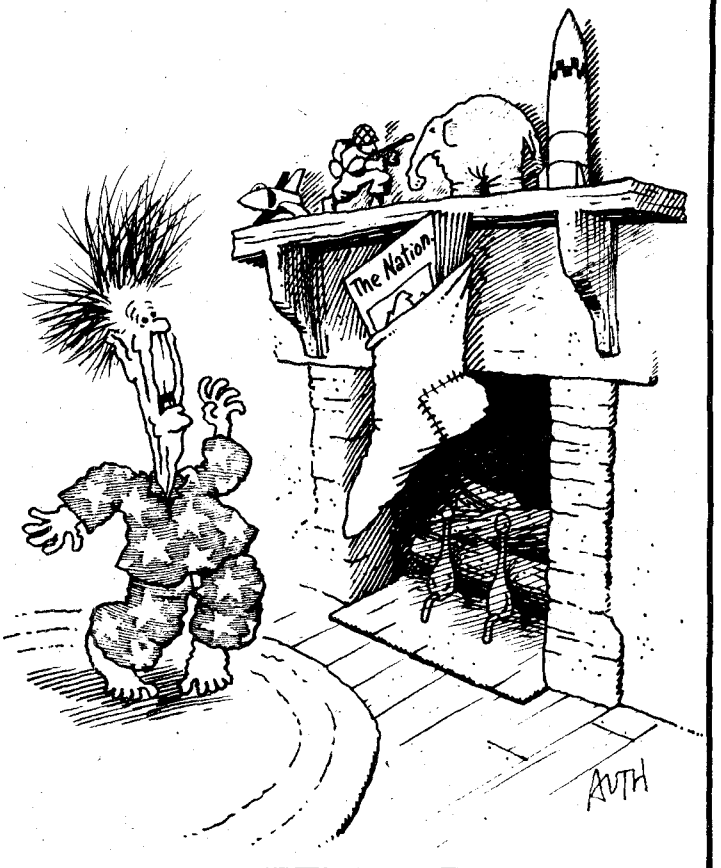

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